SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN VA MEDICAL CENTERS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AT VA MEDICAL CENTERS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1982

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 8:58 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Ronald M. Mottl (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Mottl, Applegate, Boner, Hillis, McEwen, Dunn, Smith of Alabama, and Napier.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MOTTL

Mr. MOTTL. The subcommittee will come to order.

This morning we are conducting an oversight hearing on the security force employed by the VA medical centers. You will recall that an oversight hearing was conducted on this subject on July 15, 1981. At that time we heard testimony from the Veterans' Administration, the General Accounting Office, Members of Congress, and Lt. Jerry Hruby of the Brecksville, Ohio, Police Department. It was the consensus of the witnesses that the provision of security at the VA medical centers left much to be desired.

Much of the criticism that was leveled at the VA security force pertained to job classification standards, lack of competitive salaries to attract and retain police officers, training of the VA police force, and obtaining preemployment background checks by the Office of Personnel Management.

Following this oversight hearing, I met with representatives of the Veterans' Administration and the Office of Personnel Management and obtained an agreement on actions to be taken by these two agencies to strengthen the VA security force. Following this meeting, I addressed a letter to Dr. Donald Custis, the Chief Medical Director, outlining my understanding of the agreements reached at this meeting. He responded to this letter on August 11, 1981. Without objection, this exchange of correspondence will be entered in the hearing record.[1]

Mr. MOTTL. I hope that the testimony we will hear this morning will reveal that progress has been made, particularly in the recruitment and retention of trained and effective police officers.

[1] See p. 56.

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs recently received a report which was required by section 117 of Public Law 96-330. This report made recommendations on the categories of employees in the VA that should be transferred for personnel appointment and administrative purposes from title 5 to title 38. While this report was intended to cover direct patient care services, should we find that the security force is still being hampered by a lack of flexibility in classification and pay, we might consider transferring these important VA medical center employees to title 38.

At this time I would like to call the first witness, but before I do so, I would like to suggest the way we will conduct the hearing this morning.

We will have our three witnesses each testify and ask that they remain until the third has concluded his direct testimony before the subcommittee. Then we will have them all come back as a panel for questioning at that time.

The ranking minority member, John Paul Hammerschmidt of Arkansas, has a statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN PAUL HAMMERSCHMIDT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Mr. HAMMERSCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the hearing last year concerning the security forces at Veterans' Administration medical centers, I remarked that it was elementary that veterans receiving medical care should be able to rely on a safe, crime-free environment.

We discovered through subsequent testimony that these hospitals were far from safe—that they were experiencing all types of crime—that patients and employees alike were the victims. It was suggested that in many places a climate of fear and intimidation existed that made employees remain silent about violations of law and regulations.

I don't think I am overstating the case to say many of us were appalled at this state of affairs and determined to bring about improvement.

What disturbed me most, Mr. Chairman, was a statement by the VA spokesman that "The majority of our medical centers are achieving most of their security objectives * * *" in the face of a preponderance of evidence to the contrary.

I join you in the hope today's testimony will show that progress has been made in bringing crime under control in VA facilities. At the very least, I trust we will hear a dedication to that end expressed by VA officials.

Mr. MOTTL. We are pleased to have with us this morning for our first witness Miss Marjorie Quandt, Assistant Chief Medical Director for Administration, Veterans Administration. Miss Quandt, if you would be kind enough for the record to introduce the other people that are accompanying you here this morning for this hearing before you start.

Your entire statement will be inserted into the record without objection, and you may proceed as you deem fit thereafter.[1] Welcome, Marjorie.

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[1] See p. 43.

STATEMENT OF MARJORIE R. QUANDT, ASSISTANT CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR ADMINISTRATION, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION, ACCOMPANIED BY JAMES FASONE, DIRECTOR, SECURITY SERVICE; DALE TRESIDDER, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL AND LABOR RELATIONS; GARY J. KRUMP, OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL; RALPH PATTERSON, CHIEF OF THE SECURITY SERVICE, CLEVELAND BRECKSVILLE VA MEDICAL CENTER; MAYNARD ENOS, JOHN CAPPELLO, RICHARD FURR, AND PAUL GATELY, REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICERS; AND JACK CRAIG, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL AND LABOR RELATIONS

Ms. QUANDT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for inviting us.

Accompanying me today are, to my right, Mr. James Fasone, Director, Security Service. To my left is Mr. Dale Tresidder, Office of Personnel and Labor Relations; and Mr. Gary J. Krump of the General Counsel's Office.

Behind me, starting at my right, are Mr. Ralph Patterson, Chief of the Security Service at Cleveland Brecksville VA Medical Center; Mr. Maynard Enos, Mr. John Cappello, Mr. Richard Furr, and Mr. Paul Gately, Regional Security Officers; and Mr. Jack Craig of the Office of Personnel and Labor Relations.

It has been 14 months since Dr. Camp and Mr. Fasone testified before you and your colleagues on the state of our security and law enforcement efforts. During this period, a number of significant steps were taken in the administrative and operational areas of medical center security and law enforcement.

First of all, the door has been closed to applicants for VA police officer positions who are unsuitable due to having criminal records or unsatisfactory performance during their prior employment. We have implemented expeditious but thorough investigations of applicants, which includes checks with Federal and State police agencies and contacts with former employers of applicants.

The Department of Justice has provided us with the computer terminal equipment necessary for sharing their tele-communications network which allows rapid direct checks of Federal, State and local arrest record repositories. This capability has been in full use since January 1982, and has enabled us to refrain from hiring several applicants who concealed past criminal convictions.

In addition, our training efforts have been intensified. All medical center police chiefs underwent intensive training by VA's Office of Personnel and Labor Relations, the VA General Counsel, and program officials. These chiefs are now undergoing training for the development of managerial skills. Over 350 VA police officers were trained at our central school at Little Rock, or at six medical center sites, including Cleveland. Our Regional Medical Education Centers have joined in our police training effort by developing professional quality video cassettes for use in providing uniform on-site training courses. We have also developed special training courses for VA detectives employed at our urban hospital locations.

We will, however, enter fiscal year 1983 with a backlog of 200 officers who have not completed their VA training requirements. A major upgrading of our police force is expected from a requirement, effective this fall, that all VA police undergo annual medical ex-

aminations. Once in effect, this measure will help insure that each officer is fully capable of meeting the job's emergency response requirements by requiring the reassignment of police officers who are unable to perform the physical demands of the job.

We are also taking action in other areas to upgrade VA's police security operations. This year special allocations of funds and manpower authorizations were made to medical centers which reported critical security conditions. We allocated $2.5 million for major security improvements, and $1.5 million for security equipment. We also distributed another $1 million in salary money to bring our total police strength up to 1,960—a 7.6-percent increase.

This fiscal year, all categories of reported criminal acts have remained close to the previous year's figures, with the exception of weapon introduction; that is, persons bringing weapons into a VA medical center. We have experienced a 59-percent increase in detected weapons. As of July 31, 1982, VA police confiscated 2,238 weapons, including long-bladed knives, firearms, axes, machetes, ice picks and the like. Photographs showing samples of these items are before you.[1]

These weapons were turned over to local police agencies for disposition. We have brought a significant measure of control over the problem of weapon and contraband introductions into our centers by authorizing the use of both airport-type and hand-held metal detectors. Our Bronx facility pioneered the requirement that all persons entering the facility pass electronic scanning. A broadened authority to inspect furnishings, luggage, and the clothing of suspicious persons in our centers is in the concurrence stage and should be released this fall with the publication of our revised manual of policies and procedures.

For the 9-month period ending July 31, 1982, our cumulative dollar losses from theft of Government property declined, while annual physical arrests and citation actions increased by 16 percent over the previous year. This year, 2,850 arrests have been made, and 43,090 U.S. court citations issued.

The suppression of dollar losses and the increase in enforcement actions are due principally to the implementation of our "stop and question" procedure of 1 year ago, and the constant emphasis we have maintained on the use of the procedure. Our response to the need for security improvements at the Cleveland and Brecksville Medical Centers has been to appoint a very capable and proven security chief and two equally capable and proven lieutenants. We are satisfied with the methodical changes taking place to rebuild the security unit at this center, and confident that it will be among the best in the VA system in the near future.

We have also responded to the problems at our West Los Angeles Medical Center with undercover assistance which yielded 14 arrests for illegal drug and theft activities. Our undercover and covert investigations were employed at three other medical centers to resolve serious charges of criminal activity or wrongdoing.

Mr. Chairman, we have successfully addressed numerous security problems. We have experienced, however, 498 police officer losses to date in fiscal 1982. This represents a 28 percent turnover

[1] See p. 49.

rate calculated against our average strength during the year. This is a slight decline from the previous year's losses.

Compensation for police officers continues to be a major problem in retaining quality police officers. As you may recall from our previous testimony, we are limited to the recruitment of police officers at the General Schedule Grades of GS–4 and GS–5. The pay scales of these grades are frequently noncompetitive in many areas throughout the country and especially so in the high-cost-of-living urban areas.

To review and, we hope, adjust this situation, the Office of Personnel Management sponsored an interagency study of protective occupations throughout the Government. The preliminary report on this study identified compensation problems and was submitted to agencies for comment and recommendations in July of 1981. Our response in September 1981 stated that, first, a new classification standard is needed; second, OPM should review their procedures for establishing geographical special pay rates; and third, a pilot locality pay project for police officers should be considered. In April, 1982, we reiterated our recommendations made in response to the preliminary report and our concern that these matters be promptly addressed.

OPM has authorized special rates for police officers at Chicago, Dallas, and Milwaukee. It has disapproved special rates for Cleveland, Houston, and Los Angeles. Two cases are pending in the New York and San Francisco areas.

In summary, we believe VA has done and is doing all we can to sustain an effective security and law enforcement program which fully respects the extrahumanitarian dimension of our health care facilities.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I and the others with me will be pleased to respond to any questions you or members, may wish to ask.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much, Miss Quandt, for your excellent statement this morning.

We are going to defer questioning until the other two witnesses have had an opportunity to present their testimony here this morning. So if you would be kind enough to remain with your colleagues, we would certainly appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Next we will hear from Mr. Richard Post, Associate Director, Staffing Group, Office of Personnel Management. We want to welcome you and your colleagues here. Before you start your testimony, I would like to seek some information.

On September 10, 1982, I sent a letter to Donald Devine, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, advising of today's hearing and inviting him or his designee to appear. This letter also asked for 75 copies of OPM's testimony to be furnished the committee by September 21, 1982. This is done in order to conserve time by providing subcommittee members statements prior to the hearing. This gives them an opportunity to be better prepared and I think it serves a very useful purpose. OPM completely ignored this request and your testimony was not delivered until after the close of business yesterday.

Will you explain why OPM chose to ignore what we considered a reasonable request?

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Mr. MOFFIT. Mr. Chairman, my name is Robert Moffit. I am the Director of Congressional Relations.

Mr. Chairman, there was a problem in the clearance of the testimony on Monday, and I explained to the staff we would have it up tomorrow afternoon, yesterday afternoon. Unfortunately, the messengers got it up late. We had delivered the testimony to the messengers at 2:30 and they didn't get it up until after 5 o'clock.

Mr. MOTTL. Even that wasn't very timely.

Mr. MOFFIT. No, sir, it wasn't. There is no excuse for it and, on behalf of OPM, I apologize to the committee.

Mr. MOTTL. That will never happen again, right?

Mr. MOFFIT. No, sir, it won't.

Mr. MOTTL. OK. Mr. McEwen?

Mr. MCEWEN. If I could follow up, you mentioned a clearance. Who gives this clearance?

Mr. POST. This is internal, within OPM.

Mr. MOFFIT. Mostly internal.

Mr. POST. Various offices in OPM.

Mr. MCEWEN. It is sort of like the police officer who gets you for speeding; if you would have started sooner, you wouldn't have to go so fast. If you start earlier, then you get clearance earlier.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOTTL. Mr. Casteel, do you have further questions?

Mr. CASTEEL. Let me follow up on that before you leave the witness table.

We sent the letter, I believe, on September 10. That gave you at least 2 weeks in order to prepare the testimony.

Are we unreasonable in not giving you more than 2 weeks to get the testimony up here?

Mr. MOFFIT. No, sir, you were not. I don't think the letter was received, however, until some time after that. Perhaps if we had a messenger we would have had the letter directly that day. But I suppose with the mail and the way in which the mail is handled, we received it a little bit later and, as a result, there was some delay.

Mr. CASTEEL. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that we attempted to call Dr. Devine's office yesterday to ascertain, number one, who the witness would be, and where the testimony was. We, of course, were not able to reach Dr. Devine. He was too busy. He referred us to your office, I believe——

Mr. MOFFIT. Yes, sir.

Mr. CASTEEL [continuing]. And then we were shoved from pillar to post before we finally found out who the witness would be. So it was very difficult to really obtain any information from the Office of Personnel Management.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you, Mr. Casteel.

Mr. Post, again we want to welcome you here this morning. We look forward to your testimony. Without objection, your entire statement will be inserted into the record and you may summarize or proceed as you deem fit.[1]

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[1] See p. 61.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD B. POST, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STAFFING GROUP, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY PAUL KATZ, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT; JEROME JULIUS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR PAY PROGRAMS; CARL BEELER, ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR AGENCY COMPLIANCE AND EVALUATION; AND ROBERT MOFFIT, DIRECTOR OF CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS

Mr. POST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me introduce my associates I have brought with me. To my right is Mr. Paul Katz, the Assistant Director for Standards Development. On my immediate left is Jerome Julius, who is the Assistant Director for Pay Programs. On the end, to his left, is Mr. Carl Beeler, the Acting Assistant Director for Agency Compliance and Evaluation.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this morning, Mr. Chairman, and members. I would like to discuss OPM's personnel policies which affect the security work force in the Veterans Administration medical centers.

In hearings that were held in July of 1981, the subcommittee identified several concerns in this area. Veterans' Administration and OPM staff subsequently took up those issues that were identified and over the last year a number of steps have been taken regarding personnel management of the security work force. Other steps are currently under consideration. Today I would like to give you an overview of these developments.

One of the issues that was identified during the hearings concerned the effectiveness of investigative procedures used to screen applicants for VA police officer positions. It was indicated that in some cases individuals with criminal records had been appointed as police officers without the knowledge of the appointing official. VA and OPM have subsequently adopted procedures designed to improve the investigative process of police candidates.

The Veterans' Administration agreed to conduct prescreening of applicants to determine qualifications and suitability. This involves telephone and written inquiries to former employers and local police authorities where the applicant has resided for the past five years. OPM agreed to process the security checks of applicants through Federal criminal and investigative files on an expedited basis and conduct prescreening personal investigations when the local police records were unavailable. To date, we have handled about 50 VA police cases on this expedited basis.

There was also concern expressed at the 1981 hearing about the adequacy of pay rates for police officer positions. The Veterans' Administration had requested special rates for police officers at several locations. For special rates to be warranted, there must be evidence of a significant recruitment or retention problem attributable to substantially higher salaries paid by non-Federal establishments. Further, there must be evidence that the staffing problem cannot be resolved by using an adequate recruiting program, improving working conditions, job re-design, or skill training.

Several of these requests have been approved; others have been turned down. Following the hearings last year, we agreed to review with the VA their previous requests for special rates which we had

denied. We also agreed to reconsider any previously denied request if the agency had new data or additional evidence to present.

Our review with the Veterans' Administration officials demonstrated that the disposition of the cases denied was consistent with the criteria established in law and regulation. The cases were denied because there was an availability of adequate supplies of candidates on OPM registers and a low level of turnover which could be attributed to the higher non-Federal pay. In several instances, OPM offered assistance in improving the recruiting efforts.

As the subcommittee is aware, OPM has been reviewing the job classification level of police officer positions in the Veterans' Administration medical centers over the last few years. In some instances, it has been determined that the police officers were being employed at the GS-5 pay level—$12,854 per annum—when their duties actually matched those of the GS-4 level—$11,490 per annum—in the occupational standard; i.e., the duties performed did not match the duties that were described in the position descriptions.

OPM has also looked into the question of whether a special compensation system, separate from the General Schedule, should be developed for Federal protective occupations such as police positions. We have generally found that when recruiting or retention problems have arisen, they have been highly localized or unique to a particular Federal installation or group of Federal installations, and have been adequately dealt with either by special rates, when necessary, or, more often, through changes in agency personnel management practices in such areas as job design and training.

Recognizing that any changes in this area could have an effect on the GS-4/5 police officer standard now in use for VA positions, we agreed to hold off on any further downgrading of VA police positions until all related issues have been considered and resolved. The Director approved a temporary stay or moratorium on implementing any decisions.

I think it should be clear to the members of the subcommittee that the ultimate effectiveness of Veterans' Administration security programs is not dependent solely on the classification level of a few hundred jobs, or special pay rates, or improved personnel background checks. I think the problems of organization, of training, and utilization of the VA police that have been identified in previous subcommittee hearings and in the reports of the General Accounting Office will require a more comprehensive approach. We stand ready to assist the Veterans' Administration and this subcommittee in any way that we possibly can, and in any way that we are requested.

That concludes my formal statement. Again, I would thank you and at this time we are available for any questions that you and the subcommittee members have.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much for your testimony this morning.

We are going to defer questions because we have one more witness. We are going to bring you back as a panel, so if you would be kind enough just to wait around for a few more minutes.

Our next witness will be Mr. James N. Magill, special assistant, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. Magill, we want to welcome you here this morning. It is always a pleasure to see you. We look forward to your testimony. Your entire statement will be submitted into the record without objection, and you may proceed as you deem fit.

STATEMENT OF JAMES N. MAGILL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MAGILL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the privilege of appearing before this distinguished subcommittee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars with respect to the security forces at VA medical centers.

The VFW believes a problem does exist in this area, and the primary factor contributing to this problem is the VA's inability to recruit and retain quality security personnel. In fact, a recent survey of one VA medical center conducted by our field representatives revealed the main reason for a nursing shortage at that particular facility was the lack of proper security. The nurses were afraid to work there.

Of course, not all VA hospitals are having such a serious problem, and for this reason we believe the evaluation of security, to be perfectly fair, should be done on a case-by-case basis. However, the whole system could be improved, we believe, by upgrading the entry level pay structure, not having any vacancies within the system, requiring proper employee training prior to assignment, and implementing a still more effective screening process for potential employees.

This concludes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you have, sir.

[The statement of Mr. Magill appears at p. 96.]

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much, Mr. Magill. We certainly appreciate the VFW's interest in this very important problem that we do have at the VA hospitals and the security thereof. If you will just remain now, we will ask some questions.

We would like to invite Miss Quandt and her colleagues back to the witness table, and also Mr. Post and his colleagues. We will have some questions.

Before we do so, the American Legion was kind enough also to submit a statement for the record and, without objection, their entire statement will be submitted into the record.

[The statement of John F. Sommer appears at p. 69.]

Mr. MOTTL. I think, since we have good attendance here this morning, we will invoke the 5-minute rule.

If you are going to defer the question to any of your colleagues, just have them come forth and speak into the microphones for the record so that their entire statement can be caught by the recorder.

I will start the questioning off at this point. If you recall, Miss Quandt, we had an investigation in Cleveland and we secured 42

indictments. How many convictions have been secured out of those 42 indictments?

Ms. QUANDT. I would like to refer the answer to Mr. Patterson.

Mr. MOTTL. Mr. Patterson, would you come forth and speak into the microphone, please?

We had 42 indictments out there at Brecksville and Wade Park with regards to drugs and other items. How many convictions have been sustained out of the 42 indictments?

Mr. PATTERSON. I have no idea as to the exact number of convictions. Usually it is turned over to the Brecksville police and they handle it.

Mr. MOTTL. Don't you think it is important, Mr. Patterson and Miss Quandt, to follow up to see what the result of that investigation would be? I would like to have the answer for the record here.

Ms. QUANDT. We will supply it for the record.

Mr. MOTTL. We broadened that investigation nationwide because we felt the pilfering of drugs, as we had learned several years ago, was a nationwide epidemic. We have been working with the Inspector General in the VA and I understand he at least went to three other hospitals. You alluded to this in your testimony, Miss Quandt.

Can you give us some additional information without prejudicing any investigation that is going on there?

Ms. QUANDT. I would like to have Mr. Fasone respond to that question.

Mr. FASONE. In addition to the West Los Angeles investigations, we conducted undercover and covert investigations, as was stated, at three other hospitals. In one particular case, we were successful in completely determining the source of the loss of drugs, attributed to a nurse, who has been terminated and is now under indictment.

In the second case that one of our officers, Mr. Enos, conducted, we were also able to determine that there was an illegal manufacture of the key to the pharmacy and we were able to clean up that situation.

The third situation was very much the same. We were able to determine the source of the missing drugs.

Mr. MOTTL. How many indictments were secured out of those investigations?

Mr. FASONE. One and one pending, Mr. Mottl.

The indictment process, as you know, takes quite a while. The U.S. Attorney has to give this considerable consideration.

With respect to the previous question on the indictments in Cleveland, the last report I had from the Cleveland hospital was that there were approximately six convictions so far. We expect more, but as in all other things, it takes time.

Mr. MOTTL. Mr. Fasone, we were up to 35 a few months ago, so you people are way behind. I just wondered if we got 100 percent or not. We had at least 35 convictions out of the 42. You only heard of six?

Mr. FASONE. Well, some of them, I believe, are being appealed.

Mr. MOTTL. Let's get a precise record on that. Hopefully, when there are some indictments, we can have a follow up. The greatest deterrence and the greatest security is in getting some indictments

and some convictions to deter other people from indulging in such criminal activity. So I think this is extremely important that the VA keep up with what is going on.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

As the result of the joint investigative efforts of the Cleveland Police Department and the VA's Inspector General, forty-two persons were indicted for crimes committed at the VA Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio. To date, thirty-three convictions have resulted.

Mr. MOTTL. I would like to have a report by the Inspector General no later than next week in my office as to what is going on at those other three hospitals that are being looked into. I am sure this is not just relevant to Cleveland. It has to be nationwide. Let's put an end to it.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

The three undercover and covert investigations alluded to by Miss Quandt in her statement are not related to activities of the Inspector General. These investigations were responses by Regional Security Officers to three Medical Centers which were either experiencing drug thefts or which had strong allegations of criminal activity which they could not address.

Mr. MOTTL. Miss Quandt, we had several reasons for poor security in the VA hospital system. One was monetary. If you recall, again going to the Cleveland situation, they were being underpaid there as far as being able to secure and retain competent people.

Now, Cleveland was turned down; is that correct, Mr. Post, and can you give us the reasons for——

Mr. POST. That is correct.

Mr. MOTTL [continuing]. For turning down the request for additional compensation to be able to secure better personnel?

Mr. POST. Certainly. Let me try to respond to that.

On August 10, 1981, the VA requested special pay rates, a rate of GS–5, step 4, which carries a salary of $14,138 per annum, for police positions in the VA medical centers in Greater Cleveland. The agency's justification was based on a high annual turnover—there had been 10 quits out of 39 policemen—and a salary survey of pay rates for guards at other hospitals in the Greater Cleveland area, and a draft OPM study which showed a $13,083 average salary for security guards in the Cleveland Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

In February 1982, our regional office turned down the VA request on the grounds that only 5 of the 10 quits appeared to be for pay reasons. This would make an annual turnover rate of 13 percent.

Moreover, we had recently filled 11 vacancies at the hospitals with a very high acceptance rate of candidates. Eleven out of the 17 issued job offers accepted those positions.

Finally, we noted that there were 25 to 30 well-qualified candidates for VA police positions on our registers. In June of this year, we were able to refer 28 eligibles to the VA medical centers in the Cleveland area for 11 GS–5 police positions. That list is still outstanding and the agency is working on that list.

So, based on that data, the request for higher pay rates was disapproved.

Mr. MOTTL. We will get back to that when I have my second round.

Next I would like to invite for questions at this time the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Hillis. Do you have any questions of this panel?

Mr. HILLIS Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Quandt, one thing was pretty well established during the hearing last year, and that was the relationship between the effectiveness of the hospital security force and the director's attitude toward it. Some directors support their security personnel and try to build good relations with the local police, we are told, and others tended to brush these problems aside and leave them to lower echelon management.

I saw nothing in your statement that would indicate any administrative action to encourage attention and support for hospital security forces by the directors. Has anything, in fact, been done along this line and have you advised your directors of the Chief Medical Director's expectations for developing and maintaining an effective professional force?

Ms. QUANDT. I think the most positive step that has occurred since the last hearing is the fact that the security activity has moved from a section in the engineering service to now being a direct arm in the Director's organizational box, you might say, or in his office. That move was made to indicate to directors the importance that the agency puts on security and the welfare of its patients and employees.

Further, there have been numerous discussions through the conference call and at meetings with the medical center directors as to the importance placed on security.

Mr. HILLIS Thank you.

You heard the testimony of the gentleman from the VFW concerning problems in some hospitals and the fact that the relationship of the shortage of nursing personnel could be tied to in what they view to be inadequate security provisions. I take it, from what you have just told us, with this upgrading of importance, that this problem is being addressed and will be corrected; is that your view of——

Ms. QUANDT. The problem is being addressed and it is, I think, one of the overriding concerns for most directors, as to how to be able to provide sufficient security, particularly on the evening and night shifts when there is a shift change.

Mr. HILLIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you, Mr. Hillis.

The gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fasone, I would like to get some idea of the extent of the problem in VA hospitals and the present trend that we are in. Last year Dr. Camp told the committee that during the first 8 months of the fiscal year there were more than 1,000 weapons confiscated by VA police officers in VA facilities, and there was $3 million in property losses across the system during that same period.

How does that compare with the similar period a year later, and what kind of trend is it? Is it about the same, or is it going down or up?

Mr. FASONE. Sir, I am very happy to report that up until the end of July we were holding our own, as Miss Quandt's testimony indicated, on property losses. We had been holding our own, and this seemed to parallel the FBI reports nationwide.

Last night, or yesterday, our crime report for the month of August 1982, was spit out by the computer, and now we are very alarmed. Our monthly property loss for the month of August jumped to $600,000.

With respect to weapon introductions, we did detect an increase of 59 percent in weapon introductions and confiscations. As of yesterday's report for the month of August, the cumulative total number of weapons that we have confiscated has risen to just below 2,500 for this fiscal year.

I don't know whether this is a result of the economic conditions in our country, but we certainly are anticipating higher property losses due to the economic conditions and we certainly are observing a greater incidence of people carrying weapons and using them.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. Are the detection means used by the VA any different in this last period as compared to last year's period? In other words, do you have a better detection system?

Mr. FASONE. Yes we have. At the very serious hospitals, such as the Bronx, Manhattan, New Orleans, they have already installed airport-type metal detectors at the front entrances and our police are already equipped with hand-held metal detectors.

In addition to that, we have a very high degree of consciousness above the first floor—that is, in the ward areas. Our nurses are extra vigilant, to note when a patient is being undressed for bed, that there is a weapon. They are very much more alert than to what they have been in previous years.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. On the question of property loss, this $600,000, during the month of August, is that confined to just two or three facilities, or is it spread pretty much across the whole system?

Mr. FASONE. No, sir. I hastily did an analysis—it was a brief analysis—but I found that accounting for that $600,000 loss, the highest loss was in our east coast stations and our west coast stations, and the remaining amount of loss is pretty much even among the intervening regions.

No, it is not a particular station. It is numerous stations.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. My next question, do you have a reading on the crime rate in VA hospitals as compared to the communities in which they are located? Is it about the same, higher or less?

Mr. FASONE. We have to make a general statement here, and we see no change, no alteration, to the generalization that crime occurring at a medical center is a direct reflection of the degree of crime in the surrounding locality. I haven't seen any evidence to the contrary, except, of course, if I may interject, except in the case where we have psychiatric institutions. Naturally we have a draw there of people with emotional disorders.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. You mentioned to the chairman in earlier comments about people under indictment and some had been convicted in connection with illegal drug traffic. Do you see an increase in this in VA hospitals—and I presume you're still using un-

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dercover agents—or a reduction? Have you got pretty good control of——

Mr. FASONE. We are seeing about the same number or the same frequency of reported suspicions and allegations that drug accountings are revealing discrepancies. We have not seen any increase in that.

Now, I would like to point out that the Inspector General has been tasked to conduct additional investigations and surveys at numerous medical centers, and we are not fully privy to the extent to which they are going. It is a separate effort. We are in the prevention and policing business. The Inspector General is going into more depth in these areas. They are just beginning this effort, to look at certain hospitals where there are problems in chronic drug disappearance situations.

Mr. SMITH of Alabama. Thank you, sir.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith.

The gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Dunn.

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Miss Quandt, on page 3—and the gentleman just referred to the airport devices that you put in the Bronx, and he also said the New Orleans facility. On the top of page 4, you are still studying the broadened authority to inspect—it sounds like bureaucratic language—that you're still studying it. The airport detection system has worked very well for airports. It is relatively cheap compared to the loss of life and property.

My question to you is, why don't we have it at all facilities right now? Why is it taking us a year?

Ms. QUANDT. Mr. Dunn, I believe the reason we do not have it at all facilities is that not every facility would require such surveillance, and the other is a matter of budgetary priorities.

Mr. DUNN. Certainly more than two of the facilities require it.

Ms. QUANDT. That is true. These have been added and we have directors who are requesting this equipment. That is one reason that we did have the infusion of the amount of equipment that I cited this year. We would hope that we will be placing more of this equipment next fiscal year, but we have also discovered there is the problem that many people do not want the hospital restricted to one entrance. This means that we need to multiply the number of such surveillance devices that we would have to purchase, and it will require study on our part to fit it into our equipment plans.

You can be assured, where it's necessary, it will be put in as soon as possible.

Mr. DUNN. Well, now you're going back to the word "study" again. I just challenged that, based on——

Ms. QUANDT. I beg your pardon?

Mr. DUNN. You said to me you're going back to a study again, and I just challenged that. Whatever the cost of those machines are—and I am sure they are high—it has to be less than the cost of theft and life.

I have some personal experience. My brother is a surgeon, and a number of years ago in Ann Arbor there was a shootout in the parking lot between two patients that the police force was bringing in. Out in the parking lot one of the patients was shot in the process of this gun battle, and one of the nurses suggested to my broth-

er that he go out. My brother, being a prudent man, said "No, while they're out there they're his, and when you get them in the hospital here, I'll take care of them." He thought he was being safe and he wasn't. In the middle of operating on this guy, the guy took an ice pick and put it through his arm.

I don't see why this kind of thing has to go on. We have got a history of airport detection that says this system works. Why do we have to study it? Let's just do it.

Ms. QUANDT. I am not inferring that we will continue the study. I think what we are saying is Bronx proved, and the pictures in front of you in the folder prove, what this kind of surveillance does. In using the term "study", I am referring to the budget proposal that we will have to make. I am not talking in terms of a long study.

Mr. DUNN. I thank you.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much, Mr. Dunn.

It was stated by Mr. Magill that the high turnover rate in security officers still plagues the system. Many employees, it appears, only accept VA security positions as temporary employment while they await being called for better jobs on local or State police forces.

We have seen that there is a 28 percent turnover rate calculated against the average trend during the year in personnel. This is deplorable. I think one of the main faults is with the Office of Personnel Management. They made a reasonable request, as for example in Cleveland. We just had 42 indictments over there. We have $64 million being ripped off in drugs annually from the VA system.

Now, I think it would be prudent that the Office of Personnel Management would pay several thousand dollars per man or per woman as a security guard at the VA hospitals around the United States, rather than having us ripped off continually in drugs and other items. When they make a reasonable request like that, and you people turn it down because only half you left because of salary.

Now, I am going to say to you, because I know the Cleveland area very well, I'm from Cleveland, that the average policeman's starting salary is around $18,000. The VA system should have equally as competent personnel at their installations as the police departments in those 57 communities in the Greater Cleveland area. I think it is about time that you realized that this entire problem is $64 million each year of the taxpayers' money being ripped off. Let's work together with the VA system so we can get competent personnel once and for all at these hospitals, so they can do their share to see that this ripoff doesn't take place annually.

Mr. Post?

Mr. POST. I certainly share your concern. I might comment with regard to the special rate program, these determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. The private sector pay levels, the recruiting difficulties enter into the picture, and where those result in a more severe situation or a less competitive position on the part of the Federal Government, then special rates are warranted and have been approved.

When that data does not support that kind of finding, then the rates are disapproved. We have gone over and been open, as we are

at any time, now and in the future, for the receipt of data which would show, in fact, that kind of a turnover rate, those kinds of salaries being paid in similar occupations in the private sector.

Mr. MOTTL. Did you take into consideration—as an example, Cleveland—that there were just recently 42 indictments? Second, did you take into consideration what the policemen were getting paid in the area?

Mr. POST. We certainly did. The data——

Mr. MOTTL. That wasn't relevant at all?

Mr. POST. The data we had was approximately $13,000 per annum pay rate in non-Federal establishments for similar positions. The figure of $18,000 that you are using was not in the data we have. It's a new figure to me. I don't have any idea what the source of that data is. But if the agency has additional data of that kind, they are certainly welcome to sit down with us and go over it. If it meets the criteria which are found in title 5 of the United States Code that we have to consider, and if it warrants it, we will grant it.

Mr. MOTTL. Lieutenant Hruby from Brecksville testified here. He said that last year it was $17,000. I am sure it is now at least that, and possibly $18,000 this year in the Greater Cleveland area, that policemen are making.

Now, we are not just looking for bodies there. That's been the trouble. That's with the recruitment. He said to us when he was here a year ago that a number of those people that were hired in the Cleveland area had criminal records, either misdemeanor or felony records.

This brings up another question. What is being done on the prechecking? Can somebody bring us up-to-date? Are all of these people now being prechecked thoroughly?

Mr. FASONE. The NACI process, the national agency check with inquiries, is being expedited by OPM. They are giving us a preferential expedite. However, on the preemployment screening, the VA is doing it on its own. As Miss Quandt testified, we are fully tied in by rapid telecommunications equipment to every Federal, State and local criminal record respository. We are doing that on our own. Our hospitals are required to do it through their access to what we call the NLETS system, and we have a central NLETS terminal right in central office to support them where they can't do it.

Mr. MOTTL. Once they are hired, where are they trained? Do they all go to Arkansas again? For how long a period of time, Miss Quandt?

Ms. QUANDT. The training program in Arkansas is still 1 week of basic VA orientation to our security requirements.

Mr. MOTTL. That is 1 week versus a policeman securing how many months of training? Is it 300 hours of training for the average policeman, and the VA gives them 40 hours?

Mr. POST. There is a Federal law enforcement training facility at Glynco, Ga. which most Federal protective officers attend, and for Federal protective officers I believe it is about an 8-week period. For some different levels of law enforcement officers it goes I think to 12 weeks, just as a comparison.

Mr. MOTTL. All of the security guards at the medical facilities are getting this——

Mr. POST. I don't believe they are in the VA. I believe they have the Little Rock facility and maybe some other things they are doing now.

Mr. MOTTL. Miss Quandt, you said for the record that the VA security guard gets 1 week of training?

Ms. QUANDT. VA orientation, to VA's needs——

Mr. MOTTL. Is that adequate?

Ms. QUANDT. We are assuming that those——

Mr. MOTTL. Remember, at the first hearing that is one of the major shortcomings, the inadequate training of the security force for these people that are supposed to be guarding the VA hospitals. So that hasn't been corrected then?

Ms. QUANDT. The 1-week program is based on the assumption that the officer we hire comes with acceptable level skills at the GS-4 or 5 level. Therefore, he has had some training prior to coming to us or he could not be qualified.

Our reason for the 1-week course is to orient them to our special needs.

Mr. MOTTL. I think that is a major shortcoming that has to be rectified, that you just can't train somebody for 1 week in Arkansas and say that he is going to be a competent security guard.

First of all, he comes in way underpaid, at least in the major industrial centers; second, he is inadequately trained; and then he is supposed to go on the job and do a competent job.

I think we wouldn't have the turnover in personnel if we had adequate pay, No. 1, and second, that these people are adequately trained. We could put a major dent in the $64 million being ripped off in drugs throughout the United States.

Mr. Dunn, did you have any further questions?

Mr. DUNN. No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOTTL. Mr. Casteel?

Mr. CASTEEL. Yes, sir, Mr Chairman. I have a question.

Miss Quandt, you alluded on page 5 of your testimony to a study that was being conducted by the Office of Personnel Management throughout the Government on the security force. You indicated that you received the comments and recommendations of a draft report in July of 1981 and responded in September of 1981, and then you indicated that you reiterated your previous recommendations in response to a preliminary report in April of 1982.

Now, are we still playing around with this study?

Ms. QUANDT. Yes.

Mr. CASTEEL. Mr. Post, could you inform us what the status of this study is and at what future date we might expect it will be submitted to the agencies?

Mr. POST. Well, it is true that we have been doing the study. We actually began looking at the issue several years ago. At first the focus was just on the protective occupations, that is, police, guard, firefighter. As you may know, we are now looking at the entire job evaluation process. Our director has made statements about his concern about this area and the need for classification accuracy throughout the Government in general schedule positions.

It involves many agencies. It involves considerable complexities. I think it is too early to say whether there would be any specific changes in the protective occupations as a result of this review, but we do not plan to resume our review of individual police positions in the VA, or to end the current moratorium on downgrading, until we have further progress in this effort.

Mr. CASTEEL. If I understand your response, you are really saying you don't know when, if ever, the results of this study will become available.

You know, we could study something to death, and we are about to do it I think in this instance.

Mr. POST. I would say that would be an apt description of my ability to answer your question. I do not know when. It is a complex issue, as I said.

Mr. CASTEEL. Who in OPM would know when?

Mr. POST. I am not sure anyone does at this point.

Mr. CASTEEL. Could you ask the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to give us a letter in writing on this subject, so we can put it in the record of this hearing? [1]

Mr. POST. I would be happy to ask for a statement for the record that would address that point, yes.

Mr. CASTEEL. I hope it will address that point and, you know, come up with a conclusion as to when we can get something done in this area.

Now, I would like to ask another question, Mr. Chairman, if it's all right.

Mr. MOTTL. By all means.

Mr. CASTEEL. I keep hearing the term guard or security officer or policeman bandied about. Can somebody describe what we are talking about? What's the difference?

Mr. POST. I think I will ask Mr. Katz to answer that. This is his specialty area.

Mr. KATZ. Yes, sir, I would be pleased to.

Guards principally protect property. There is a specific guard occupation. That guard occupation is one of approximately 425 named in defined occupations in the general schedule of the civil service—that is, principally white collar guards.

Moving up the hierarchy, there are police. Police guard physical property as well as persons. Beyond that, there are a variety of other law enforcement occupations at higher levels, such as detectives, border patrol, customs patrol, criminal investigators and so on.

Mr. CASTEEL. Miss Quandt, as a follow up, where you do you place the VA security force in that hierarchy?

Ms. QUANDT. With the police and the detectives; we have no use and no need for guards because of our problems and the fact that we must protect our patients and our staff.

Mr. CASTEEL. So you would classify them as policemen?

Ms. QUANDT. Yes.

Mr. CASTEEL. Thank you.

Ms. QUANDT. Or a detective. We do have detectives.

Mr. MOTTL. Mr. Dunn, do you have any other questions?

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[1] See p. 74.

Mr. DUNN. No, I don't.

Mr. MOTTL. Let me make this observation as I understand where we have come in one year since our last hearing.

We have made some improvement in the prechecking of candidates to become security officers for the VA hospital care system. But we are still woefully inadequate in the pay, and also in the training.

Now, what I would like for you to do, Miss Quandt, and also Mr. Post, is for you people to have a joint meeting and report back to me within a week, if you would, and see if there can be improvement in both of those areas. If not, Miss Quandt, I want you to suggest legislation for me to introduce. It will be introduced in the next several weeks. Possibly it won't go anywhere in this session, but at least it could be the forerunner for the 98th Congress.

Now, administratively, I think we can take care of this. But if you say it can't be done that way, we are going to do it legislatively. We are going to make sure we have an adequate security system in the VA hospitals, because I think it will be less expensive for the taxpayers to improve the pay and also the training so that we can secure more competent people and retain them, rather than having the vast turnover that we have had over the years. We haven't made any major improvement in that area.

I think the second and the major beneficial factor for the taxpayer is that we're going to see a reduction in the amount of property stolen and also the pilfering of drugs and the wrongdoing with drugs at those facilities. So I think the taxpayer will be much better off if we can improve the security system in these two areas I have suggested, rather than letting the status quo continue to go on. So let's move forward, and I hope I can have your assurance that we're going to move forward in these two areas.

Any other questions? Mr. Casteel?

Mr. CASTEEL. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask if we can leave the record open in order to direct questions in writing to all of the witnesses and get them back and put them in the record of this hearing, and particularly to receive Dr. Devine's statement and answer to our questions.

Mr. MOTTL. Without objection, the request will be considered moved and the record will be kept open for those answers to come forward for the record.[1]

I again want to thank the witnesses for their cooperation this morning. I think if we all work together we can make some vast improvement in this area.

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOTTL. Yes, Mr. Dunn.

Mr. DUNN. Before you close the hearing, I would like to add an addendum to the record, not necessarily germane to today's hearings.

I would like to personally thank you for the privilege of serving under you as the Chairman.

Mr. MOTTL. Well, that's very kind of you.

Mr. DUNN. As a freshman, as a member of the opposite party, you have more than gone out of your way to make yourself and

[1] Written committee question's and their response appears on p. 75.

your staff and your time available to me when I have had a concern that you thought was justifiable. In no other committee that I have served on have I received the same kind of treatment.

I think the fact that you will not be a member of the 98th Congress is a loss to the veterans, the taxpayers, and to members of both sides of the aisle. I sincerely consider it a privilege to have served under you.

Mr. MOTTL. Thank you very much, Jim. I really appreciate those remarks. They are very much appreciated and not deserving.

You know, it is only through members like yourself that make it all possible. You have worked very hard on this committee and I want to commend you for all your contributions. It is very seldom we see freshmen come in and take such a progressive attitude and work hard, and especially in the area of the disabled, those people in the wheelchairs, and improving in their prosthetics.

It was through your suggestion and your constant pushing in this area that we did something. I want to really commend you because that is an area that deserves the attention of this committee. It certainly has gotten it and we're going to see improvements thanks to you. I thank you for your invaluable help. I really appreciate it.

Without objection, the committee hearing will now come to a conclusion. It was nice having you with us this morning.

[Whereupon, at 10:03 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]

APPENDIX

Department of Medicine and Surgery

Veterans Administration

AUG 11 1981

Honorable Ronald M. Mottl
Chairman, Subcommittee on Hospitals
and Health Care, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to respond to your letter dated July 22, 1981, concerning the improvement of our security and law enforcement program.

I share your understanding of the measures agreed upon during the July 21st meeting in your office and am informed that they are being vigorously acted upon. Miss Marjorie R. Quandt, the Assistant Chief Medical Director for Administration and immediate supervisor of the security program manager, is designated as the coordinator of the numerous efforts underway as a result of the Subcommittee Hearing and our subsequent meeting with officials of the Office of Personnel Management.

Mr. Robert Pettyjohn, VA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Personnel, and Mr. Arch Ramsay, Acting Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and their key staff members met on July 22, 1981, to review the issues of classification, special rates for selective geographical areas, and preemployment screening and security investigations of VA Police Officers and to develop plans for addressing these. The enclosed letter from Mr. Ramsay represents the agreements reached. I am confident that our continuing communications will be directed to resolution of individual case problems.

On the issue of lengthening our current training program based upon the length of training given by most police agencies, an essential factor has not yet been mentioned. Police departments of State, municipal and county jurisdictions and the Federal agencies employ applicants for police positions who meet their mental and physical qualifications. Normally, there are no prior police experience or specialized training qualifications required. Traditionally, accepted police applicants have no knowledge of law enforcement and the employing departments must provide extensive training lasting from two to six months. In lieu of establishing a full police training program to provide occupational qualification and encumbering the high cost associated with such an effort, an alternate path was chosen. The Office of Personnel Management's Qualification Standards for the Police Series prescribes a very acceptable level of prerequisite police experience or substitutable college level training required for appointment to Federal service as a police officer.

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In addition to this basic standard, the Office of Personnel Management has recently provided a special qualification rating schedule which adds greater specificity to the qualities of an applicant's experience and training which is acceptable for appointment as a Veterans Administration Police Officer. Both the OPM Qualification Standard and the special VA qualification rating schedule (Enclosures 1 and 2) are to be used by OPM Area Offices when examining, certifying, and referring applicants for VA Police Officer positions.

Our training rationale is based upon the validity of the applicant examination and certification process by both OPM Area Offices and our own Medical Center personnel specialists. A police officer applicant who is fully qualified under the standards discussed should firmly possess the basic knowledge, skills and aptitude required for police work. An employing agency such as ours need only orient a basically well qualified individual in its policies and procedures. On this premise, a centralized VA Police School has been operational for ten years. At this facility, a forty-hour course of instruction is presented which stresses the Federal criminal procedures our police are required to follow and the numerous other special policies and procedures governing security and law enforcement in the health care environment. Dr. Camp's overall plan for improvements which you have requested by September 1, 1981, shall include plans for the extension of our forty-hour course, the provision of supplemental training at our Regional Medical Education Centers, and an increase in on-site training efforts.

Your interest in the security of our medical centers is appreciated.

Sincerely,

DONALD L. CUSTIS, M.D.
Chief Medical Director

Enclosures

United States
Office of
Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415

In Reply Refer To

Mr. Michael Rudd
Assistant Administrator for
Personnel
Veterans Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Rudd:

This is in reference to recent meetings held with Chairman Mottl of the House Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care and representatives of the Veterans Administration regarding security problems in VA medical facilities. The Office of Personnel Management shares the concerns expressed by the Chairman, the VA, and the Government Accounting Office about this matter and about the need to bring about improvement.

At the meeting with Congressman Mottl, I agreed on the part of OPM to work with VA in attempting to reach mutually satisfactory solutions to the VA police related personnel issues. As I emphasized at the meetings, the solutions have to be achieved within the constraints of applicable law and regulation. Representatives of our two agencies have been meeting since that time to explore the options for resolving the classification, special rate, and investigation problems which had been described in the VA and GAO testimony.

The classification issue is the one on which there appears to be the most fundamental difference between our agencies both in terms of the adequacy of the present standard and of its application to existing jobs. Compensation for protective positions has always presented some unique problems. OPM is presently conducting a study of such occupations to determine whether or not there is sufficient reason for excluding them from the General Schedule. The preliminary report is now out for agency comment. For that reason, I have recommended to Director Devine and he has concurred that OPM withhold any further action on downgrading of GS-5 VA police positions until the study has been completed and the decisions made on how to proceed on the report recommendations.

This is not a classification decision. VA still has the responsibility for classifying positions accurately in accordance with the appropriate standards as specified in Section 5105 of Title V and the other requirements of Chapter 51 of that Title. As you are aware, Director Devine has committed OPM to a major effort to ensure accurate classification of positions in the General Schedule and so it was with some reluctance that

I made the recommendation noted above. I strongly urge that VA use the interim period to develop more information about the actual duties being performed by the police and the management practices involved so that any future classification decisions will be based on the most complete information available.

The tentative agreement reached on investigations is as follows:

- The VA will conduct a prescreening of applicants to determine qualifications and suitability, through telephonic and written inquiries, to places of prior employment for the past 2 years, and local police authorities where the applicant has resided or worked for the past 5 years.

- The OPM will conduct a limited number of NACI investigations on an expedite basis. These will not exceed 500 cases per year and will normally be completed within 40 days. There is no charge for these NACI cases. In the event the VA is not able to obtain local police coverage during the prescreening, the OPM will attempt to obtain that coverage by means of a personal investigation. This search will be conducted on a reimbursable basis based on actual expenses. Until the charge can be established, it is estimated to cost $50 per search.

With regard to special rates, OPM is reviewing all of the requests submitted by the VA within the past 2 years and our regions have been asked to expedite the submission of material for this review. Section 5303 of Title V allows the establishment of higher minimum rates in areas only when a showing has been made that pay rates in private enterprise are so substantially above the pay rates of statutory pay schedules as to handicap sufficiently the Government recruitment or retention of well qualified individuals. We will give full consideration to all such requests from VA but the individual requests will have to be judged individually against the requirements of the law. Here again, I urge that your staff and field installations work closely with the OPM Compensation and regional office staffs so that a complete and expeditious review can be completed.

I hope that the steps noted above will be helpful. I would be happy to discuss any aspect in greater detail if you wish to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Arch S. Ramsay

Arch S. Ramsay
Acting Deputy Director

Police Officer GS-2/5
Detective GS-6/7
Supervisory Police Officer GS-5/9
Supervisory Detective GS-7/8

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

Police perform or supervise performance of law enforcement work involved in the protection of life, property, and the rights of individual citizens. They enforce Federal, State, county, and municipal statutes, laws, and ordinances, and agency rules and regulations. They preserve the peace; prevent, detect, and investigate accidents and crimes; arrest violators; and aid citizens in emergency situations.

EXPERIENCE, TRAINING, AND RELATED REQUIREMENTS

All candidates for positions in grade GS-2 must take a written test to demonstrate their abilities to understand the written word, and to follow oral directions.

Candidates for positions at GS-3 and above are required to show experience of the length and nature described below:

Minimum experience and training

Grade	Total experience required (years)
GS-2	None
GS-3	1
GS-4	2
GS-5	3
GS-6	4
GS-7 and above	5

Acceptable experience

For positions at GS-3, acceptable experience is that which clearly demonstrates that the candidate possesses a knowledge of general law enforcement methods and techniques that could be applied in performing police functions. This experience must have included protecting property, equipment, or materials; and person-to-person relationships in enforcing various rules and regulations. This experience may be obtained in positions such as:

An armed guard involved in the protection of property, materials, equipment, data, or information, requiring frequent personal contact with the public;

A private detective or police officer responsible for performing routine investigational duties such as shadowing or checking on the activities of individuals and checking on the security of private property.

For positions at GS-4 and above, acceptable experience is that which has given the candidate a broad knowledge of police operations, practices, and techniques. The experience must have included making arrests, protecting life and property, maintaining law and order, investigating accidents, preventing crime, and preserving the peace. Experience of this type normally may be acquired through regular, active service as a member of a Federal, State, county, municipal, or local police force or similar organization; or through service as a military police officer in the Armed Forces or Coast Guard.

Quality and level of experience

For nonsupervisory positions, at least 6 months of the required experience must have been at a level of difficulty and responsibility comparable to that of the next lower grade, or at least 1 year of required experience must have been at a level of difficulty and responsibility comparable to that of the second lower grade in the Federal service.

Supervisory experience

For supervisory positions, see the qualification standard for "Supervisory Positions in General Schedule Occupations" in part III of this handbook.

Nonqualifying experience

Experience as a prison or jail guard, night watchman, or other position which did not provide knowledges and skills in general law enforcement methods and techniques that could be applied in the performance of police functions, will not be considered as acceptable experience.

Substitutions

(1) Successful completion of police recruit training in a large civilian police force,

a police academy, or police school, may be substituted for the experience requirements at GS-3.

(2) Successful completion of a Reserve-Police training course which included a minimum of 36 hours of actual lecture or training in police department procedures and methods, and local laws and regulations; and which led to the award of a certificate of proficiency or issuance of a badge, may be substituted for a maximum of 6 months of the experience →required for GS-3←.

(3) Successful completion of 1 year of study in a resident school above high school level may be substituted in full for the GS-3 requirements, provided each semester of study included 3 semester hours, or the equivalent, in one or more of the following subjects: police administration, police law and evidence, police investigation, criminology, law enforcement, general law, or similar subjects pertinent to police work.

(4) Successful completion of 2 years of study in a resident school above high school level may be substituted in full for the GS-4 requirements, provided each semester of study included 3 semester hours, or the equivalent, in one or more of the following subjects: police administration, police law and evidence, police investigation, criminology, law enforcement, general law, or similar subjects pertinent to police work.

(5) Successful completion of a full 4-year course of study required for a B.S. degree in Police Science from a resident school above high school level may be substituted in full for the GS-5 requirements.

MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR QUALIFICATIONS

For positions requiring the operation of a Government-owned motor vehicle, candidates must:

—Pass a practical road test, driving the appropriate type vehicle supplied by the agency to which the candidate is provisionally certified;

—Possess a valid State or territory motor vehicle operator's license or obtain one within 30 days after entry on duty;

—Have a satisfactory safe driving record.

BASIS OF RATING

Competitors for all positions will be rated on a scale of 100. The basis of rating will be:

For GS-2: Competitors will be rated only on the basis of the written test. They will be rated on a scale of 100. A rating of at least 70 must be obtained on the test as a whole.

For GS-3 and above: An evaluation of experience and training. Candidates must present evidence of ability to discharge the duties of the position. Information for evaluating experience and training will be taken from the application form and any additional information obtained through confidential inquiries to supervisors, teachers, and other references.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Candidates, in addition to other qualifications, must demonstrate that they possess traits and characteristics which are important to success in police work. Among these are: alertness, ability to work in stress situations, ability in oral expression, tact, integrity, capacity for effective public relations, practical intelligence, and good judgment.

AGE LIMITS

Persons appointed to police positions must be at least 21 years of age. This requirement may be waived only for veterans. Persons between the ages of 20 and 21 may file applications for examinations. Such persons will be examined but only veterans may enter on duty before attaining the age of 21 years.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must be physically able to perform efficiently the duties of the position, which are described elsewhere in this standard.

→For most positions, applicants must have binocular vision correctible to 20/20 (Snellen). Uncorrected vision must test at least 20/70 (Snellen) in each eye. Near vision corrected or uncorrected must be sufficient to read Yaeger Type 2 at 14 inches. However, there may be some positions suitable for persons with good vision in one eye only.← Ability to distinguish basic colors is essential. Ability to hear the conversational voice, without the use of a hearing aid, is required. Persons with an amputation of arm, hand, leg, or foot should not apply. Applicants must possess emotional and mental stability. Any physical condition which would cause the applicant to be a hazard to himself or to others will disqualify for appointment.

Office of Personnel Management

OPM Operations Letter 338 - 29

Operations Letter

Letter No. 338 - 29

Washington, D. C. 20415
June 5, 1980

SUBJECT: Rating Criteria for Veterans Administration Police Officer

1. In an effort to improve the quality of police officer candidates referred to the Veterans Administration (VA), we have worked with the VA to develop a Supplemental Qualifications Statement and a crediting plan for evaluating police-related experience. We are providing this package under separate cover. Offices examining for VA police officers should use this material the next time they announce unless their current crediting plan is already providing the VA with high-quality candidates.

2. Although the crediting plan we are providing is a product of our working with the VA, it can provide a basis for examining for any police officer position. We hope that using this crediting plan will help distinguish qualifying from non-qualifying experience. Examiners should take care to determine that the experience which was supposed to have given a candidate a broad knowledge of police operations, practices, and techniques has included the elements listed in the GS 083 qualification standard under "Acceptable experience for positions at GS 4 and above". Experience as a night watchman or guard is not qualifying at this level. Even experience with the military police may have been in an administrative support function rather than actual police work.

3. The classification standard for GS 085 is helpful in distinguishing guard and police officer work. Guards are more concerned with protecting property, whereas police officers are more concerned with protecting people. The arrest authority of guards is usually the same as that of private citizens, whereas the arrest authority of police officers results from their having been designated by public law, statute, or other official act as law enforcement officers.

Richard B. Post

Richard B. Post, Deputy Associate
Director for Staffing (Acting)

Inquiries: Staffing Management Branch, Staffing Services, 632-6030

Code: 338, Qualification Requirements (General)

Distribution: Regional Directors and Area Managers

Letter Expires: April 20, 1981

USE RESTRICTED TO THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICERS, AND PERSONS ENGAGED IN RATING CANDIDATES FOR GENERAL SCHEDULE JOBS.

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CREDITING PLAN
VA Police Officer

KNOWLEDGE OF GENERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

POINTS

4 Experience requiring an extensive knowledge and application of appropriate police methods and techniques in apprehending persons guilty of FELONIES or SERIOUS CRIMES.

for example: Investigate and collect evidence leading to felony arrests or indictments; conduct searches and seizures; when probable cause for crime has been established, serve or execute arrest warrant as an officer of a Federal, state, county or municipal organization (experiences might include crimes such as assault, rape, armed robbery, attempted murder, grand larceny, sabotage, etc.)

3 Experience requiring the application of pertinent or appropriate police methods and techniques to MISDEMEANORS and MINOR CRIMES.

for example: Conduct physical arrests of misdemeanors for mandatory appearance violations; conduct searches incident to arrests; perform incarcerations and booking procedures; notify persons of their constitutional rights, such as right to remain silent...

2 Experience applying a basic knowledge of law enforcement procedures in HANDLING ROUTINE PROBLEMS (Federal, state, county or municipal authority to enforce the laws of that government with vested authority to arrest for violations of the law).*

for example: Perform arrest functions to include the issuance of lawful citations for misdemeanors, i.e., disorderly conduct, traffic violations, disturbing the peace, unlawful solicitation, public intoxication, etc; perform stationary post duty such as directing traffic at a gate or parking area, checking employees, residents or visitors and vehicles for proper identification.

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*NOTE: Creditable arrest authority is only that authority vested in the applicant by a governmental body who directly employed the applicant to enforce the laws of its jurisdiction.

ABILITY TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.

POINTS

4 Experience in a HIGHLY STRESSFUL work environment dealing with people of unique backgrounds or behaviors.

for example: Experience in a psychiatric institution or in a setting with a high number of emotionally disturbed persons; duty in an environment where one has to approach and deal with violations by VIP's (e.g. congressmen, elected officials, doctors, lawyers, etc.)

3 Experience in an environment requiring a HIGH LEVEL OF TOLERANCE and a sensitivity to attitudes.

for example: Experience in a highly frequented public clinic or hospital setting; member of a campus police force, or other environment requiring tolerance and sensitivity to a high rate of hostile behavior.

2 Experience MONITORING EVENTS and activities where there's likelihood of accidents or rowdy behavior.

for example: Experiences requiring crowd controls such as football games and other sporting events or entertainment events such as rock concerts, jazz festivals, etc; prolonged periods of intensive traffic direction, such as traffic jams due to bad weather or accidents, etc.

SKILL IN PROVIDING SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

POINTS

4 FORMALIZED DIRECT SERVICE to public representing an organization.

for example: Police experience with collateral duty as public relations officer which included the extension of public services to support community social service efforts - such as giving presentations at schools and community organizations; providing emergency support services to hospitals, such as soliciting blood donors for emergency cases, etc. other related experience providing emergency support to governmental, social or health agencies.

3 Direct service to public PROVIDING PHYSICAL AID or ASSISTANCE or other emergency service to public

for example: Patrol operations requiring the assistance of citizens in need; aiding owners of disabled vehicles; transporting injured persons to medical facilities; caring for the disabled and juveniles; helping elderly; administering first-aid or other similar experiences providing direct service to public.

2 Frequent public contact to provide GENERAL INFORMATION, direction or assistance.

for example: Police officer, security officer or similar duty in a vehicle registration office, or reception area; experience giving directions to visitors; control desk duty - receiving and recording messages and instructions involving emergencies, complaints, violations, accidents, etc.

SKILL IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

POINTS

4 Experience preparing FORMAL REPORTS and documents

for example: Complete full field investigation reports; prepare police complaints and affidavits in support of arrest warrants; prepare and update police unit operating procedures or manuals; writing, updating or revising brochures.

12 semester hours in English composition, writing and editing, journalism, etc., or comparable courses requiring extensive writing.

3 Experience preparing ROUTINE REPORTS

for example: Prepare routine correspondence for court clerks and officers; prepare police reports for courtroom needs; prepare courtroom testimony; complete full reports of preliminary investigations; perform administrative writing tasks required by Federal, state, county, or municipal courts in court/police liaison functions;

6 semester hours in english composition, writing and editing, journalism or similar courses requiring reports and writing

1 Experience maintaining LOG BOOKS and EVENTS JOURNALS

for example: Prepare traffic citations, complete daily activity reports, maintain events journal; complete reports on offenses handled, etc.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENT
FOR
VA POLICE OFFICER
(Complete and Submit this Form with Your Application)

Name (Last, First, Middle)	Date of Birth	Social Security Number

I. EDUCATION OR TRAINING: In the spaces below, show all successfully completed course work in police science, police law and evidence, police administration, police investigation, criminology, law enforcement, general law or similar subjects pertinent to police work. In addition, include any English composition, journalism, report writing or similar courses requiring extensive writing. Please show only coursework taken in institutions above the high school level. Indicate semester hours, quarter hours or clock hours of completed study.

Title of Course	Semester, Quarter or Clock Hours	School Attended and Dates

II. POLICE EXPERIENCE:

1. Do you have or have you ever had arrest authority? ☐ YES ☐ NO

2. Give the source of your arrest authority and date granted. _____

3. Were you a direct employee of the Federal, state or local governmental body which granted you arrest authority? ☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Describe your work experience in any of the following police functions.
   a. Questioning witnesses and suspects (investigations):

   b. Searches:

   c. Incarceration and booking:

   d. Testifying in court proceedings:

   e. Information control desk:

   f. Notifying citizens of constitutional rights:

   g. Issue, serve or execute arrest warrant:

   h. Other (specify):

III. PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY: Indicate below, either by writing in or checking the appropriate box, the type of offenses or crimes with which you have worked and kind of experience you have had with this offense.

OFFENSE OR CRIME	Dates of Job From	To	Issued a Citation	Investigated Case	Made Arrest	Other (Specify)
Traffic Violations						
Property Protection/Patrol						
Disorderly Conduct						
Assault						
Disturbing the Peace						
Public Intoxication						
Rape						
Attempted Murder, Murder						
Armed Robbery						
Grand Larceny						
Sabotage						
Unlawful Solicitation						
(Specify)						

TRANSMUTATION TABLE

RAW SCORE	RATING
16	100
15	96
14	93
13	89
12	85
11	81
10	78
9	74
8	70
BELOW	INELIGIBLE

IV. PUBLIC SERVICE: Please check if you have had experience in any of the following areas. Indicate in the appropriate column, the community group, organization, medical facility, etc., to which or for which you provided the service, the dates of employment and job title.

DUTY	GROUP SERVED	DATES OF EMPLOYMENT/JOB TITLE
___ Giving oral presentations to school or community groups		
___ Providing emergency support services to hospitals, or other service organizations		
___ Transporting injured persons to medical facilities		
___ Aiding owners of disabled vehicles		
___ Caring for disabled persons and juveniles		
___ Administering First Aid		
___ Giving directions to motorists		
___ Providing general information in reception areas or control desk		
___ Reviewing credentials and ID's		
___ (Specify)		

V. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Check below if you have experience preparing any of the following written communications and describe when and how these duties were performed in your job.

___ Daily Activity Log

___ Testimony

___ Traffic Citations

___ Brochures or Manuals

___ Police Reports

___ Investigation Reports

___ Correspondence

___ Affidavits

___ Memoranda

VI. WORK ENVIRONMENT:

1. Describe any work experience you have had maintaining order at school events or crowd control at football games, rock concerts or jazz festivals. In addition, describe any experience you have had involving prolonged traffic direction because of inclimate weather or accidents, etc.

2. Describe any police experience you have had working in a high-pressure environment or working under stress. Include any experience at a psychiatric hospital or public clinic; experience dealing with emotionally disturbed persons; violations by VIP's such as Congressmen, elected officials, doctors, lawyers, etc.; or experience handling domestic disturbances.

July 22, 1981

Dr. Donald L. Custis (10)
Chief Medical Director
Veterans Administration
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Dr. Custis:

This letter is for the purpose of confirming my understanding of the agreements reached at the meeting in my office on July 21, 1981 concerning the Department of Medicine and Surgery's security force.

It is my understanding that Mr. Arch Ramsey, the Acting Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and his staff will immediately meet with Mr. Robert E. Pettyjohn and other staff members from the Office of Personnel of the Veterans Administration. This meeting is for the purpose of working out an acceptable procedure to provide the grade of GS-5 as the minimum grade for members of the VA's security force, as well as to provide special rates in those geographic areas where recruitment and retention of qualified police officers is a problem and the VA must be competitive. In addition, Mr. Pettyjohn and his staff will examine the present method of pre-checking prospective employees, especially those who would be employed as security personnel, in order to preclude the employment of undesirables in these positions. Further, it was my understanding that after these procedures are developed and implemented, in select cases the OPM will be requested to provide a full field investigation of certain employees. Miss Marjorie Quandt of your staff is to immediately undertake the development of satisfactory training for VA security force personnel and provide me with this program at the earliest possible time. As indicated in our meeting, local law enforcement agencies in most jurisdictions require 300 hours of training prior to being eligible for appointment to a law enforcement position, and even private security agencies usually require a minimum of 150 hours of training.

In addition, it is my understanding that the representative of the General Counsel's office, Mr. Fred L. Conway, will actively pursue the question of having the States accept concurrent jurisdiction over VA property, including medical facilities, as opposed to the VA retaining exclusive jurisdiction.

As we discussed just prior to your departure, you will designate a member of your staff to coordinate all of these efforts, including the plan I requested Dr. Camp to provide me by September 1, 1981. I would appreciate your furnishing me the name of the individual you choose to coordinate these efforts and confirming these understandings as the beginning of the plan to strengthen the VA's security force. An early response will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

RONALD M. MOTTL
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Hospitals and Health Care

RTC:bae

CROSS REFERENCE SHEET

TO—FROM _____

ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

MAIN SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION _____

RE _____

STATEMENT OF

MARJORIE R. QUANDT

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

September 23, 1982

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for inviting us. Accompanying me are: To my right, Mr. Fasone, Director, Security Service and Mr. Patterson, Chief, Security Service of the VA Medical Center Cleveland, Ohio. To my left are Mr. Tresidder, Office of Personnel and Labor Relations, Mr. Krump of the VA General Counsel's Office and Mr. Enos, Mr. Cappello, Mr. Furr and Mr. Gately, our Regional Security Officers.

It has been fourteen months since Dr. Camp and Mr. Fasone testified before you and your colleagues on the state of our security and law enforcement efforts. During this period, a number of significant steps were taken in the administrative and operational areas of medical center security and law enforcement. First of all, the door has been closed to applicants for VA police officer positions who are unsuitable due to their having criminal records

or unsatisfactory performance during their prior employment. We have implemented expeditious but thorough investigations of applicants which includes checks with Federal and State police agencies and contacts with former employers of applicants.

The Department of Justice has provided us with the computer terminal equipment necessary for sharing their telecommunications network which allows rapid direct checks of both Federal, State and local arrest record repositories. This capability has been in full use since January of this year and has enabled us to refrain from hiring several applicants who concealed past criminal convictions.

In addition, our training efforts have been intensive. All Medical Center Police Chiefs underwent high intensity training by VA's Office of Personnel and Labor Relations, the VA General Counsel and program officials. These Chiefs are now undergoing training for the development of managerial skills. Over 350 VA police officers were trained at our central school or at six medical center sites, including Cleveland. Our Regional Medical Education Centers have joined in our police training effort by developing professional quality video cassettes for use in providing uniform on-site training courses. We have also developed special training courses for VA detectives employed at our urban hospital locations. However, we will enter FY 1983 with a backlog of 200 officers who have not completed their training requirements. A major upgrading

of our VA police force is expected from a requirement, effective this fall, that all VA police undergo annual medical examinations. Once in effect, this measure will help insure that each officer is fully capable of meeting the job's emergency response requirements by requiring the reassignment of police officers who are unable to perform the physical demands of the job.

We are also taking action in other areas to upgrade VA's police security operations. This year special allocations of funds and manpower authorizations were made to medical centers which reported critical security conditions. We have allocated $2.5 million for major security improvements, and $1.5 million for security equipment. We also distributed another $1 million in salary money to bring our total police strength up to 1,960--a 7.6 percent increase.

In Fiscal Year 1982 all categories of reported criminal acts have remained close to the previous year's figures with the exception of weapon introduction, i.e., persons bringing weapons into a VA facility. We had a 59 percent increase in detected weapons. As of July 31, 1982, VA police confiscated 2,238 weapons, including long bladed knives, firearms, axes, machetes, ice picks and like items. Photographs showing samples of these items are before you. These weapons were turned over to local police agencies for disposition. We have brought significant measure of control over the problem of weapon and contraband introductions into our centers by authorizing the use of both airport-type and hand-held metal detectors. Our Bronx facility pioneered the requirement that all

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persons entering the facility pass electronic scanning. A broadened authority to inspect furnishings, luggage, and the clothing of suspicious persons in our centers will also be released this fall with the publication of our revised manual of policies and procedures.

For the nine-month period ending July 31, 1982, our cumulative dollar losses from theft of government property declined while annual physical arrests and citation actions increased by 16 percent over the previous year. This year 2,851 arrests have been made and 43,090 U.S. Court Citations issued. The suppression of dollar losses and the increase in enforcement actions are due principally to the implementation of our "Stop and Question" procedure of one year ago, and the constant emphasis we have maintained on use of the procedure. Our response to the need for security improvements at the Cleveland and Brecksville medical centers has been to appoint a very capable and proven security chief and two equally capable and proven lieutenants. We are satisfied with the methodical changes taking place to rebuild the security unit at this center and confident that it will be among the best in the VA system in the near future.

We have also responded to the problems at our West Los Angeles medical center with undercover assistance which yielded fourteen arrests for illegal drug and theft activities. Our undercover and covert investigations were employed at three other medical centers to resolve serious charges of criminal activity or wrongdoing.

Mr. Chairman, we have successfully addressed numerous security problems; however, we did experience 498 police officer losses thus far in FY 1982 which represents a 28 percent turnover rate calculated against our average strength during the year. This is a slight decline from the previous year's losses. Compensation for police officers continues to be a major problem in retaining quality police officers. As you may recall from our previous testimony, we are limited to the recruitment of police officers at the General Schedule Grades of GS-4 and GS-5. The pay scales of these grades are frequently noncompetitive in many areas throughout the country and especially so in the high cost-of-living urban areas. To review and, we hope, adjust this situation the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) sponsored an interagency study of protective occupations throughout the government. The preliminary report on this study identified compensation problems and was submitted to agencies for comment and recommendations in July 1981. Our response in September 1981 stated that: (1) a new classification standard is needed; (2) OPM should review their procedures for establishing geographical special pay rates; and (3) a pilot locality pay project for police officers should be considered. In April 1982 we reiterated our recommendations made in response to the preliminary report and our concern that these matters be promptly addressed.

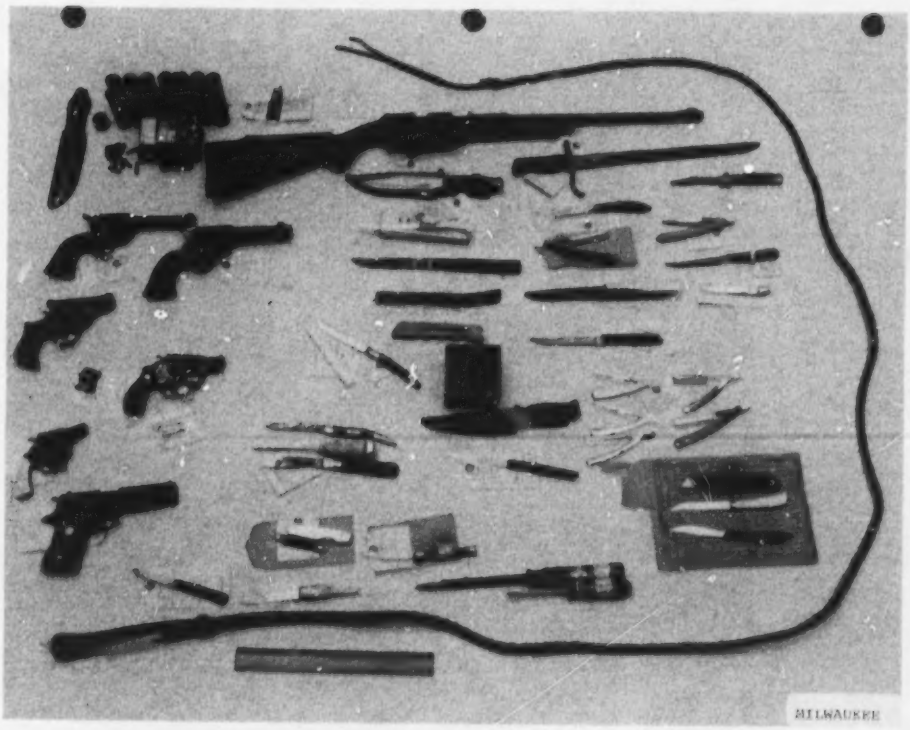
OPM has authorized special rates for police officers at Chicago, Dallas and Milwaukee; has disapproved special rates for Cleveland,

Houston and Los Angeles; and two cases are pending in the New York and San Francisco areas.

In summary, we believe we have done and are doing all we can to sustain an effective security and law enforcement program which fully respects the extrahumanitarian dimension of our health care facilities.

Mr. Chairman, we will be pleased to respond to any questions you or members may wish to ask.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF WEAPONS, DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND OTHER CONTRABAND SEIZED AT VA MEDICAL CENTERS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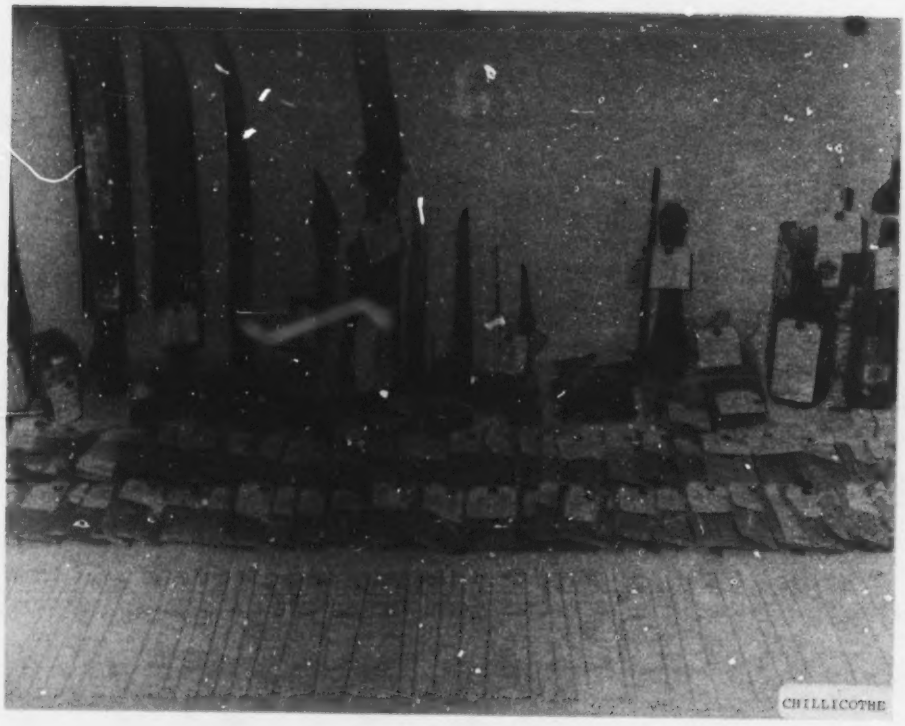
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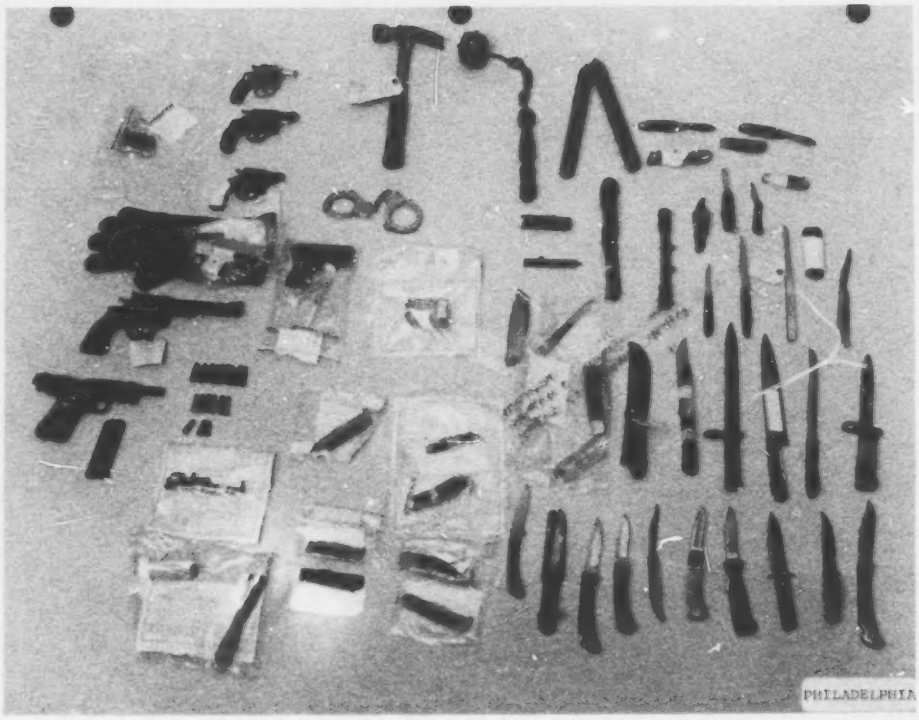
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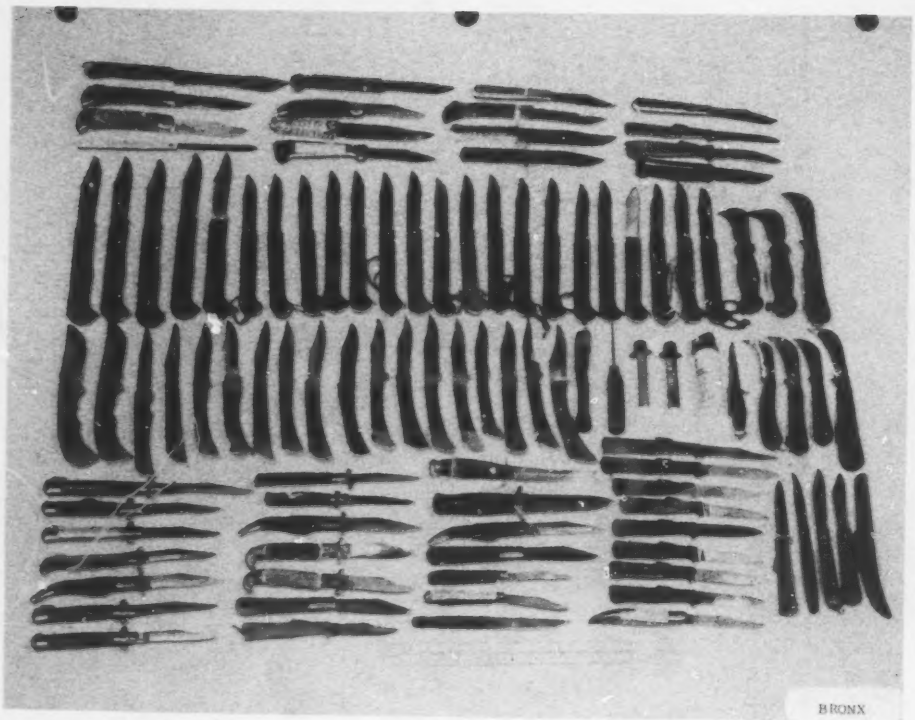
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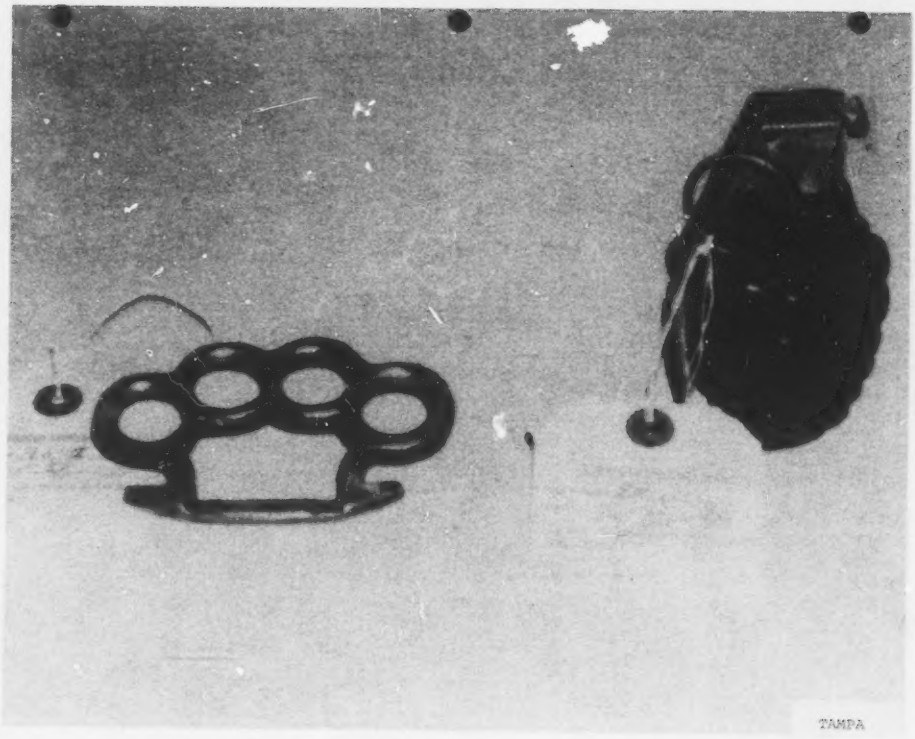
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STATEMENT OF RICHARD B. POST
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STAFFING GROUP
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS
AND HEALTH CARE, COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

September 23, 1982

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss OPM personnel policies which affect the security work force at Veterans Administration Medical Centers. In hearings held on July 15, 1981, the Subcommittee identified several concerns in this area. VA and OPM staff subsequently took up the issues identified and over the last year a number of steps have been taken regarding personnel management of the security work force. Other steps are currently under consideration. Today I would like to give you an overview of these developments.

One of the issues identified during the hearings concerned the effectiveness of investigative procedures used to screen applicants for police officer positions. It was indicated that in some cases, individuals with criminal records had been appointed as police officers without the knowledge of the appointing official. VA and OPM have subsequently adopted procedures designed to improve investigative processing of police candidates.

The Veterans Administration agreed to conduct pre-screening of applicants to determine qualifications and suitability. This involves telephone and written inquiries to former employers and local police authorities where the applicant has resided for the past 5 years. OPM agreed to process security checks of applicants through Federal criminal and investigative files on an expedited basis and conduct pre-screening personal investigations when local police records were unavailable. To date we have handled about 50 VA police cases on this expedited basis.

There was also concern expressed at the 1981 hearing about the adequacy of pay rates for police officer positions. The Veterans Administration had requested special rates for police officers at several locations. For special rates to be warranted, there must be evidence of a significant recruitment or retention problem attributable to substantially higher salaries paid by non-Federal establishments. Further there must be evidence that the staffing problem cannot be resolved by using an adequate recruiting program, improving working conditions, job redesign, or skill training.

Several of these requests had been approved, others had been turned down. Following the Subcommittee hearings, we agreed to review with VA their previous requests for special rates which had been denied. We also agreed to reconsider any previously denied request if the agency had new data or additional evidence to present.

Our review with VA demonstrated that the disposition of the cases denied was consistent with the criteria established in law and regulation. The cases were denied because of the availability of adequate supplies of candidates on OPM registers and the lack of turnover due to higher non-Federal pay. In several instances OPM offered assistance in improving the recruiting programs.

As the Subcommittee is aware, OPM has been reviewing the job classification level of police officer positions at Veterans Administration Medical Centers over the last few years. In some instances it has been determined that police officers were being employed at the GS-5 pay level ($12,854 p.a.) when their duties actually matched those of the GS-4 ($11,490 p.a.) occupational standard.

OPM has also looked into the question of whether a special compensation system separate from the General Schedule, should be developed for Federal protective occupations such as police positions. We have generally found that when recruiting or retention problems have arisen, they have been highly localized or unique to a particular Federal installation or group of Federal installations, and have been adequately dealt with either by special rates when necessary, or--more often--through changes in agency personnel management practices in such areas as job design and training.

Recognizing that any changes in this area could have an effect on the GS-4/5 police officer standard now used for VA positions, we agreed to hold off on any further downgrading of VA police positions until all related issues have been considered and resolved.

It should be clear to the members of the Subcommittee that the ultimate effectiveness of Veterans Administration security programs is not dependent solely on the classification level of a few hundred jobs, or special pay rates, or improved personnel background checks. The problems of organization, training and utilization of the VA police which have been identified in previous subcommittee hearings and the reports of the General Accounting Office will require a comprehensive approach. We are willing to assist the Veterans Administration in this effort in any way requested.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

STATEMENT OF

JAMES N. MAGILL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

SECURITY FORCES AT VA MEDICAL CENTERS

WASHINGTON, DC SEPTEMBER 23, 1982

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before this distinguished Subcommittee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with respect to the security forces at VA medical centers (VAMC). The VFW is appreciative of the Chairman for holding this hearing, demonstrating his and the Subcommittee's continuing concern for our nations veterans.

Mr. Chairman, the VFW is privileged to have on its staff a number of highly trained and competent Field Representatives whose primary responsibility is to survey and file reports on the effectiveness of the Veterans Administration's one hundred seventy-two medical centers. In conducting the surveys our Field Representatives interview various VA hospital professionals, support staff and patients resulting in a comprehensive evaluation of the entire facility; including security. The opinions expressed in this statement are a result of their knowledge in this area and continuing commitment in meeting their pro-

fessional goals.

It is very difficult to make a single, general statement which accurately describes security in all VA medical centers. Location, size, patient and employee population are all variables which demand that such an analysis be made on a case-by-case basis. Certainly it should be no surprise a multi-structure facility would have more security problems than a single-structure facility; and, that a VA medical center which is located in what might be considered a "high-crime" area would demand more security than one located in a more stable, tranquil setting. If one were forced to make a general statement on security at VA medical centers, it would have to indicate there is definite room for improvement; and in some cases, dramatic improvement.

Recently, one of our Field Representatives conducted a survey of the VA medical center at Kansas City, Missouri and found the security situation far from adequate. The center is located in the middle of an area considered to be a very high crime district and almost everyday some type of crime is committed involving patients, visitors or employees. These crimes vary from minor offenses such as possession of alcohol to assault with a deadly weapon. In the past two years seven security officers have been injured while performing their duties. In addition, it has been documented that since FY 80, the crime rate has increased 34 percent, while police responsibility has increased 21 percent. This particular center, as with other centers, is experiencing a nursing shortage, and as a result three wards have been closed. What is unique is the fact that nurses cited security as one of the reasons for terminating employment.

Of course, not all Medical Centers are experiencing the same degree of security problems as that of the previous example. However, some generalities seem to be universal. A high turn-over rate in security officers still plagues the system. Many employees, it appears, only accept VA security position as

temporary employment while they await being called for better jobs on local or state police forces. Although this year's turn-over rate of 28 percent is lower than last years (35 percent), we believe the adverse economy is responsible for the decline, not improved conditions within the VA's security division. Another factor associated with the high turn-over rate is the relatively low entry level salary offered by the VA. At present, security officers can expect a starting salary of about $13,000 per year; well below that offered by other law enforcement positions.

Proper and immediate training of VA security officers is another problem that exists system-wide. Even though the VA has an excellent training facility, some officers have not received formal training for more than twelve months after initial employment. Needless to say, expectations for high work performance are unwarranted when the employee has not been properly and/or adequately instructed in the procedures relevant to his position.

Mr. Chairman, the VFW believes the VA security system can be improved. Foremost in our recommendations is having the Office of Personnel Management review the classification rating for VA security officers and up-grade the starting level. By starting at a higher GS rating, the VA could become more competitive with the private sector, resulting in a possible reduction in the unacceptable turn-over rate. It is our understanding this request has been made to OPM by many VA medical centers, but to no avail. In addition, The VA should have no vacancies in the security system. At the time of our most recent survey of the Kansas City VAMC, only 14 of 21 security positions were filled. It is our understanding, since the survey was conducted, one security officer has been added. Fifteen officers, though, are still too few considering security is a twenty-four hour, seven day week responsibility. The VFW also recommends a more thorough pre-

employment screening process be implemented so as to reduce the risk of hiring individuals not suited or not likely to enhance the security system at VA medical centers.

As stated previously, the security issue should be viewed on a case-by-case basis. Not all VA hospitals have serious problems and some are improving on what had been a totally unacceptable situation. Both divisions of the Cleveland VA Medical Center, we understand, have shown improvement over the past year with the hiring of a new experienced Chief of Police. Unfortunately, it is also our understanding that OPM has not deemed it necessary to review the VAMC security officer rating schedule or take any actions which may improve on, in some cases, dangerous situations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

STATEMENT OF JOHN F. SOMMER, JR., DEPUTY DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SEPTEMBER 23, 1982

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Legion appreciates this opportunity to present our views on the Security Program of the Veterans Administration medical care system.

The American Legion takes seriously the safety and security of the patients and staff in the 172 VA medical centers throughout the country.

The maintenance of a safe and secure environment is adjunct to the provision of quality health care to veterans. It is equally important that the employees at VA medical centers be able to carry out their important duties and responsibilities without the apprehension of worrying about their own safety and the safety of the patients to whom they are providing care and services.

It is for these reasons that The American Legion closely monitors the effectiveness of the VA's security and law enforcement program during site visits to the medical care facilities by our Field Representatives. We also solicit and receive reports from Legion Hospital Representatives and Department Service Officers on the status of the security program at the medical centers at which they serve on a full or part-time basis.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission we will illustrate a number of examples of the problems that are being encountered at some of the VA facilities.

VAMC, Lyons, New Jersey - Police problems over the past several years have steadily increased. Examples include the use of contraband such as alcohol and marijuana, and these in turn have encouraged assaults and larcency of government, patient and and employee property. An increase in vehicular traffic has necessitated the use of courtesy summonses and issuance of

federal violation notices in order to curtail traffic abuses. Retention of police officers has been very difficult as many of them have transferred to local police departments where salaries are higher and opportunities for promotion are greater.

VAMC, Phoenix, Arizona - There is a need to upgrade the surveillance system at this facility. The number of closed circuit television cameras are minimal and a need exists for metal detectors. There has reportedly been significant amounts of contraband and weapons confiscated at this facility recently. Theft and vandalism have been reported to be high in the outlying areas, particularly the parking lot. Many of the police officers do not receive training until they have been on the job for a year.

VAMC, Battle Creek, Michigan - There are several small canteens located throughout the facility which have been robbed numerous times. The officers are not trusted to have keys to approximately seventy-five percent of the buildings, which has caused many problems, particularly when alarms are activated and need to be reset. Training is considered to be insufficient and not provided on a timely basis.

VAMC, Albany, New York - Eight new officers have been hired within the past two years. Low pay is the main reason for the turnover. A high caliber of officers is expected, but the pay does not fit the need, and the Office of Personnel Management registers usually do not have the best qualified applicants. The candidate at the top of one list was an ex-policeman who, it was found, had become intoxicated in uniform and shot up a bar. During the site visit of a Legion Field Service Representative the local bomb squad was notified that a grenade, apparently bobby-trapped, was found on one of the wards. It turned out to be a smoke grenade, but the potential for disaster was illustrated. The loss of government and personal property at the VAMC from January thru July, 1982, was in excess of $10,000, and it was estimated that by the end of the year losses will total over $25,000.

VAMC, Bronx, New York - There are a number of reasons that officers are hard to recruit and retain at this facility. Money

is a big factor. The officers have to provide the same service as the New York City police, but are not permitted to carry weapons. Just prior to a recent site visit by an American Legion Representative a call was issued that intruders were seen in one of the outbuildings on the station grounds. When security arrived a suspect reportedly drew a revolver and held the officers at gunpoint while making an escape. This was apparently not an isolated incident. In February 1982, a metal detector was installed at the main entrance to the hospital, prompted by an unfortunate incident in which two employees were shot. Prior to the implementation of the precautionary measure, only 31 weapons were confiscated in a two year period. During the first month of operation 141 weapons were discovered. During March, April, and May 1982, there were a total of 391 weapons uncovered by the detection device. It was determined following a series of careful observations that the method of operation of the metal detector varied from cautious to haphazard. On some occasions the individuals entering the facility were carefully screened - other times the bags and other articles carried by those entering the facility were not checked by the security personnel, although they had activated the hand scanner used to check such baggage. On one occasion, during a heavy flow of visitors, individuals were observed passing through the detector without waiting for the control signal to change, advising them to proceed.

The VA security service does not have absolute control of the hospital grounds, as construction and demolition crews who employ their own security force are working on the premises. VA security provides radio communication and backup capability when necessary. On one occasion, after repeated failures to contact a construction security officer by radio, it was discovered that he was asleep. Reportedly, investigation of another incident showed that thieves were stealing government property from one of the outbuildings while a construction security guard had his back turned. During FY 1981 government property amounting to $66,420 was stolen from the facility. As of April 1982, property

amounting to approximately $18,000 had been taken.

VAMC, Dublin, Georgia - A factor that limits effective security at this facility which is located on a 173 acre plot and consists of 43 buildings is that the 8 police officers cannot thoroughly inspect individuals or vehicles without encountering the possibility of violating subject's civil rights. Consequently, alcohol, weapons, drugs, etc., can almost freely be transported onto the premises. Although this has not presented a major problem, such items have been confiscated during scheduled locker inspections.

VAMC, Memphis, Tennessee - The Memphis facility is located in the center of the most crime ridden precinct in the city which, in and of itself is an unnerving situation. Weapons are confiscated on an almost nightly basis and items that have been turned over to the Memphis Police Department include knives, pistols, hatchets, ammunition, brass knuckles, night sticks, chains and other homemade weapons. These have been confiscated from visitors, patients and some employees. Recently an incident of rape occurred on the grounds. The Security Service is currently at ceiling, but 8 additional personnel are needed.

Mr. Chairman, these are but a few examples which illustrate the deficiencies present in the security and law enforcement program of the VA medical care system. The reasons for which such an explosive situation exists are several, and they are homogeneous throughout.

Inadequate salaries for VAMC security personnel render the recruitment and retention of qualified individuals almost totally impossible. The available pay grades for police officers are GS 4 and 5. The range of grade for the position of Chief is GS 7 to 11.

The American Legion is of the opinion that the Office of Personnel Management is blameworthy for the existence of this situation, as OPM is responsible for the establishment of the grade structure. An example of the inadequacy of the pay scale is illustrated in the case of a VA police officer in New York City, whose starting salary is reported to be a little less than

a married couple with one child receiving welfare payments. Another example that has been noted is that a wage grade employee working on a loading dock at a VAMC receives a substantially larger salary than the non-supervisory security personnel. To the Legion it is no wonder that individuals possessing the necessary qualifications for such a position quickly seek more lucrative employment in the local community.

A widespread complaint of VA officials is the inadequacy of the training provided VAMC security personnel, which consists of a one week course of instruction provided at Little Rock, Arkansas. It has been recommended on many occasions that the training program be extended to a minimum of two weeks, and The American Legion would concur therewith.

Another prevalent problem is the shortage of security personnel throughout the system. Aside from the substantial number of vacancies that exist, a majority of the medical centers meeting their assigned ceiling have expressed a need for additional security personnel.

And finally, the OPM classification policy penalizes the security police officers assigned to those facilities at which a low crime rate exists by downgrading GS 5 positions to GS 4. To The American Legion such thinking is incomprehensible.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, it is obvious that in order to sustain an effective, professional VA security program, some distinct changes will have to be made to improve the organizational structure. The American Legion feels it necessary to urge the Office of Personnel Management to look toward revising the grade scales for VA police officers, and conducting more timely background investigations on potential candidates for that position.

It would appear to the Legion that the need exists for an expanded training course for the VA police officers, and that such training should be provided prior to their being placed on the job in the capacity for which they were employed.

Mr. Chairman, we wish to thank you and the Members of this Subcommittee for holding a hearing on what The American Legion perceives to be a serious problem within the VA medical care system.

As was stated at the outset, this organization takes seriously the safety and security of the patients and staff in the VA medical centers.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our statement.

United States
Office of Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415

In Reply Refer To

Honorable Ronald M. Mottl
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Mottl:

This is in response to your request for a status report on the Office of Personnel Management's study of Federal police compensation which was mentioned in testimony before your subcommittee on September 23, 1982.

The study of protective occupations was begun several years ago, and was originally undertaken with a view toward the establishment of a comprehensive, Government-wide classification and pay system for these occupations. The staff-level drafts of this study which were circulated during the summer of 1981 reflected this orientation.

I have now had an opportunity to personally review the issues involved and and have concluded that such a comprehensive system is neither necessary nor desirable. While the existence of a number of separate classification and pay systems for police officers seems on its face to argue for the creation of a single system, the wide variety of Federal police activities and the widely differing traditions and career patterns of the various police organizations make such comprehensiveness less than compelling. Furthermore, a single system would undoubtedly result in significantly increased costs to the Government.

I do agree with the agencies that there are some classification and pay problems for police under the General Schedule. Those problems can, however, be resolved at an acceptable cost within the existing General Schedule structure. The Office of Personnel Management has agreed to work closely with the Veterans Administration to ensure proper interpretation and application of the classification standard for police officers. Other classification and pay problems can be solved through more effective position management and the use of special rates, when appropriate. We look forward to working with the Veterans Administration and other agencies to accomplish these improvement objectives.

I share your sense of urgency about these problems particularly as it relates to the well-being of our hospitalized veterans. I have directed my staff to keep the Committee advised of progress in this area.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Devine
Director

Veterans Administration

OCTOBER 26 1982

Honorable Ronald M. Mottl
Chairman, Subcommittee on Hospitals
and Health Care
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to respond to your requests made at the conclusion of the Subcommittee hearing on the status of security at VA medical centers on September 23, 1982, as well as to provide answers for the record to the questions contained in your letter to me of October 4.

You asked at the hearing that officials of both VA and OPM meet to determine measures which can be taken to remedy the problem of a high turnover of VA police officers due to grades and salary. On October 1, 1982, representatives of the VA's Office of Personnel and Labor Relations and of the DM&S Security Service, met with Mr. Richard Post, Associate Director, Staffing Group, and other Office of Personnel Management officials to discuss actions that can be taken to improve the VA police officer classification and pay situation.

Notwithstanding that this October 1 discussion did not yield an immediate solution to the problem, VA still strongly believes that existing problems in the classification and compensation of our police officers can best be resolved by favorable OPM action on VA's recommendations forwarded in 1981 relative to the OPM Government-wide compensation study of the protective occupations. Pending an OPM decision concerning this occupational study, VA proposes to develop supplementary material to the GS-5 grade criteria in the present standard to reflect specific crime deterrence duties characteristic of VA police officer assignments. The standard currently requires police officers to deal typically with felonies and other serious incidents, in addition to less severe crimes, in order for grade GS-5 to be supported. Our alternative interpretation of the standard and plan for application will be reviewed with OPM. We plan to develop this material within the next four to six weeks.

We are also developing special guidelines or procedures for assisting facilities in documenting the need for special rates for certain key occupations such as Police Officer. We are hopeful that improvements such as these will help contribute to a more effective OPM special rate program. At a minimum, it should help reduce the amount of time required for a VA field facility to get a decision on a special rate request.

As to the questions in your October 1 letter to me, the VA responses are set forth in the enclosure to this letter.

Your interest in the security of our medical centers is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Everett Rivers Jr.

ROBERT P. NIMMO Deputy Administrator For
Administrator

Enclosure

Question: 1. Besides conducting routine criminal investigations of the applicants for VA police positions, do you also conduct investigations of his or her credit history to see if the applicant may be susceptible to thefts, bribery, etc?

Answer: Preemployment checks of police applicants are made to determine whether a record of criminal convictions exists and whether the applicants' given records of prior employment are accurate and nonprejudicial. Checks of credit histories are not made.

Question: 2. Training has been discussed many times before this Subcommittee. The VA's statement indicates 200 current officers have not completed their training. Why are these critical employees permitted to assume their duties without completing their training requirement?

Answer: The police officer employed by any VA Medical Center is not the individual normally employed by State, municipal or county police departments who has no previous police experience, or skills and who must undergo basic police training. The applicant for VA police officer employment must possess the qualifications, which cannot be waived, specified in the Office of Personnel Management Qualification Standards and in a special VA police officer qualification rating schedule. He or she must have been employed as a police officer by a governmental agency which vested the power of arrest in the individual to enforce the laws of its jurisdiction. All applicants must, further, provide evidence of their knowledge of general law enforcement methods and techniques, skill in written communications, skill in providing service to the public, and an ability to operate effectively in stressful situations. When employed, individuals possessing familiarity with these bodies of knowledge and these basic police skills are sufficiently prepared for duty following local orientations with normal supervision.

However, it is incumbent upon the VA to then provide qualified employees with the additional knowledge and skills to perform within the Agency. Because of the particular requirements of the VA police officer job category, additional, specialized training is required. This additional training is centralized to provide for a uniformly high level of training among the various police departments at VAMC's.

Within the VA, police officers are the only occupational specialty who receive their specialized training at a central facility. The size of the facility and the costs of travel to attend the training program limit the number of officers who can feasibly be trained. The number of officers VA must have actually on duty is greater than the number that can be put through the training facility, particularly because of high officer turnover. Therefore, while VA police officers are able to immediately assume law enforcement responsibilities under local supervision, the finishing touches to their training must sometimes be delayed due to limited VA resources.

Question: 3. In regard to the training needs of these 200 police officers what additional resources would be necessary to effectively eliminate the training backlog?

Answer: Simply adding resources will not reduce the constantly high backlog of untrained officers. The major cause of the backlog is the high turnover rate among the officers. During the past Fiscal Year police turnover within our six geographic regions was approximately:

Northeastern	23.3%
Mid-Atlantic	20.4%
Southeastern	15.9%
Great Lakes	24.0%
Midwestern	27.6%
Western	36.3%

The turnover is frequently due to inadequate pay. If our compensation schedule can be adjusted to be more competitive, attrition would be reduced and our training efforts will be more fruitful.

Question: 4. The VA's statement indicates the Department of Medicine and Surgery has improved security with supplemental resources during the past year. The Subcommittee has been concerned that security staffing levels may be inadequate for the task. As a VA official with direct responsibility for the conduct of this program, do you believe a 7.6% staffing increase adequately protects VA patients, staff and Government property?

Answer: Yes. Our goal is to install security coverage at each medical center with the highest possible economy of manpower. However, we feel that our mission will be further enhanced 1) as we improve the recruitment and retention of quality police officers, and 2) as we install new high technology equipment.

Question: 5. It was mentioned that the VA has established a "stop and question" procedure. I gather this has been successful in deterring potential criminal acts, but what sort of success have you had in deterring crimes against individuals on VAMC property?

Answer: In addition to the emphasis on the "stop and question" procedure to curtail property losses, strong emphasis has been placed on a closer communication between the patient care staff and our medical center police during the past three years. As a result of this emphasis, rapes were reduced from twelve in FY 80 to six in FY 81 and to three in the first eleven months of FY 82. Similarly, other disturbances have declined, including attempted rapes. Deterring crimes against persons and using medical center police to intervene in assaultive situations are the highest priorities of the Security and Law Enforcement Program in the Department of Medicine and Surgery.

Question: 6. It was mentioned on page 2 of the prepared VA testimony that the VA has developed special training courses for VA detectives. What is the law enforcement background of the people who prepare these courses? Do you enlist the assistance of local or Federal law enforcement agencies to conduct these training courses?

Answer: The Chief of the VA Police School at the VA Medical Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas, served eight years with the Memphis Police Department and completed several courses in police training methods as well as eighteen semester hours towards a Masters Degree in Education. He also served in the Memphis Police Department Training Academy for a period of two years. All others involved in the development of our training courses served in major metropolitan police departments or in a Military Service's Office of the Provost Marshal. Most importantly, those involved in developing our training courses are all veteran VA Medical Center Police Chiefs and have served in both undercover and overt criminal investigations at our medical centers. As a result, the courses are highly relevant to the VA medical center environment. Federal law enforcement agency assistance in providing both centralized and local training input is obtained frequently. Both the FBI and DEA have actively contributed to course presentation at our Police School and at several of our medical center training programs. Due to the fact that our VA Police are responsible by statute for the enforcement of Federal laws and regulations, the main thrust of their instruction is in the area of Federal Crimes and Criminal Procedures and the rules of court of the U.S. District Courts in which their medical centers are located.

Question: 7. Multi-media training for police officers, such as the video cassettes mentioned on page 2 of the VA statement, does serve a useful purpose. However, in my opinion, nothing counts as much as firsthand police experience. Are you making a bona fide effort to recruit experienced law enforcement personnel? If not, do you feel that your recruits are truly benefiting from video instructions?

Answer: As mentioned previously, we are certainly making every effort to recruit only the truly qualified and most suitable candidates for VA police officer positions. The OPM-approved special rating schedule for examining VA police officer applicant qualifications is a demanding examination document. Admittedly, the General Schedule pay scales are clearly below what is needed to attract applicants meeting our criteria in many localities and because of long-vacant positions, the temptation to lower requirements in order to fill vacancies is ever present. But regardless of the level of prior experience of a new police officer, local training and orientation via carefully developed video instruction is, we believe, most valuable. VA-produced training material dealing with general law enforcement procedures stresses points which are unique to successful police performance in a VA health care facility.

Question: 8. It is the Subcommittee's understanding that the VA is continuing to train its police officers at the Little Rock VA Medical Center for a one week period. As you know, most Federal law enforcement personnel receive intensive training over several weeks at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Brunswick, Georgia. Have you considered arranging with Treasury Department officials to have your officers trained in Brunswick in addition to the orientation session at Little Rock? Do you truly believe this limited orientation session at Little Rick is adequate? What are the qualifications of the Little Rock instructors?

Answer: The basic five-week Police Training Program syllabus of the Department of the Treasury Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) has been carefully examined and full consideration was given to the use of that facility. We believe that the combination of very selective entry qualification standards for VA police officers and our training of these officers in the specific manner of applying their basic police knowledges and skills in the VA is both the most practical and most beneficial course of action. The other Federal agencies with self-protection missions which participate in the FLETC training program have several common needs such as firearms qualification training and basic instruction in the common law areas of arrest and search. Essentially, the FLETC Police Training Program is a basic police recruit course which is unsuitable to the VA mission and which the VA does not require under existing selection standards. On one occasion, one of our medical centers detailed its police officers to a State-required "Peace Officer" course of six-weeks duration. This experiment was very unsatisfactory - the returning VA

Police Officers could not fully adjust to and accept concepts of situational law enforcement when dealing with patients, the absence of firearms as a police tool and disparities in criminal penalties and procedures which exist between State and Federal laws. Partly because of those results, but in general because of the unique law enforcement needs of the agency, we are not willing to allow VA Police Officers to learn from other sources which enforcement techniques and legal interpretations shall be followed in the maintenance of law and order at our medical centers.

We do believe the Little Rock course is adequate. Each of the instructors at the VA Police School is a graduate of an accredited college and is an expert in his respective specialty area. Each instructor has served a tour of duty in a Military or Air Police unit, on a local police department,and in VA medical center police units.